

88070963

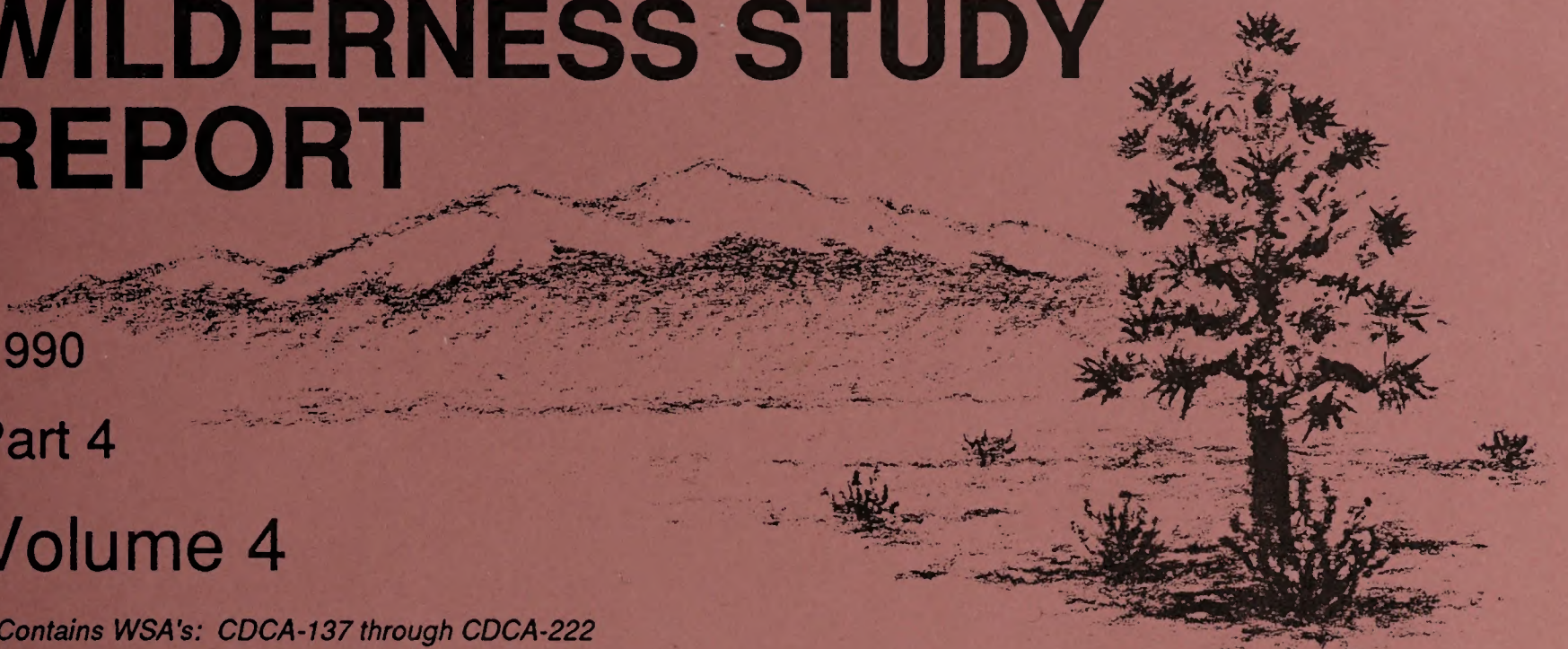
Bureau of Land Management

# CALIFORNIA STATEWIDE WILDERNESS STUDY REPORT

1990

Part 4

Volume 4

*Contains WSA's: CDCA-137 through CDCA-222***Manly Peak**  
CDCA-137**Owlshead Mountains**  
CDCA-156**Grass Valley**  
CDCA-173A**Middle Park Canyon**  
CDCA-137A**Little Lake Canyon**  
CDCA-157**Black Mountain**  
CDCA-186C**Slate Range**  
CDCA-142**Owens Peak**  
CDCA-158**Newberry Mountains**  
CDCA-206**Funeral Mountains**  
CDCA-143**Cow Heaven**  
CDCA-159**Rodman Mountains**  
CDCA-207**Resting Spring Range**  
CDCA-145**Horse Canyon**  
CDCA-160**Bighorn Mountains**  
CDCA-217**Greenwater Range**  
CDCA-147**Kelso Peak**  
CDCA-160B**Morongo**  
CDCA-218**Greenwater Valley**  
CDCA-148**Skinner Peak**  
CDCA-160C**Whitewater**  
CDCA-218A**Ibex Hills**  
CDCA-149**Frog Creek**  
CDCA-163**Saddle Peak Mountain**  
CDCA-219**Ibex Spring**  
CDCA-149A**El Paso Mountains**  
CDCA-164**South Saddle Peak Mountain**  
CDCA-220**Nopah Range**  
CDCA-150**Golden Valley**  
CDCA-170**Avawatz Mountains**  
CDCA-221**South Nopah Range**  
CDCA-150A**Red Mountain**  
CDCA-172**South Avawatz Mountains**  
CDCA-221A**Pahrump Valley**  
CDCA-154**Blackwater Well**  
CDCA-173**Kingston Range**  
CDCA-222



BLM-U-950

'91 JUL 31 110:25

**BLM MISSION STATEMENT**

*The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for the balanced management of Public Lands and resources and their various values so that they are considered in the combination of uses that takes into account the long-term needs of future generations for renewable and nonrenewable resources. These resources include recreation, range, timber, minerals, watershed, fish and wildlife, wilderness and natural, scenic, scientific and cultural values.*



1088070963

QH  
76.5  
C2  
C35  
1991  
V.7  
C.2

*Supplemental information to these reports includes Environmental Documents, Mineral Survey Reports, and maps. To review these supplemental data, or to obtain additional information, please contact:*

*Bureau of Land Management  
Branch of Wilderness Resources  
Room 3360  
Main Interior Building  
18th and C Streets  
Washington, D.C. 20002*

*(202) 208-6064*

*or*

*Bureau of Land Management  
Branch of Lands and Recreation  
Federal Building  
2800 Cottage Way  
Sacramento, CA 95825*

*(916) 978-4730*

**BLM Library  
Denver Federal Center  
Bldg. 50, OC-521  
P.O. Box 25047  
Denver, CO 80225**



BI M Library  
Denver Federal Center  
Rm. 30, CC-201  
P.O. Box 35047  
Denver, CO 80222



# **Manly Peak**

*CDCA 137*



Manly Park

1899



## MANLY PEAK WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-137)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 32,026 acres

Manly Peak WSA is in Inyo County, in the north-central portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The nearest community is Trona, approximately 15 miles southwest. The city of Ridgecrest is approximately 36 miles southwest. The study area contains 31,754 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), 272 acres of State land, and no private inholdings (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The north boundary is the Thorndike Mine access road in the bottom of South Park Canyon. This mine and the quarter-mile spur route serving it have been excluded from the WSA. At the mouth of South Park Canyon, the north WSA boundary follows the base of the mountains east to the edge of Death Valley National Monument. The east WSA boundary follows the national monument boundary south to Mengel Pass, where the Goler Wash Road serves as the remainder of the east and the south boundary. The west WSA boundary generally follows an improved dirt road on the east side of Panamint Dry Lake, although it leaves this road in three places to exclude areas of heavy mining activity.

From the west, the WSA is composed of short alluvial fans which quickly give way to the steep, jagged ridges and deep canyons of the Panamint Mountains. Elevations range from 1,140 feet along the west side to 7,196 feet on Manly Peak near the east edge of the WSA. Vegetation changes with altitude, from creosote bush scrub at the lower elevations to pinyon/juniper woodlands on the higher peaks. Intermittent streams flow from springs within the larger canyons, and support strips of riparian vegetation characterized by cottonwood, desert willow, and cattails.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE --- 0 acres recommended for wilderness  
31,754 BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for the Manly Peak WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.



The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally-preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan and further explained in the California Wilderness Study Overview.

The no-wilderness recommendation is based on the following rationale:

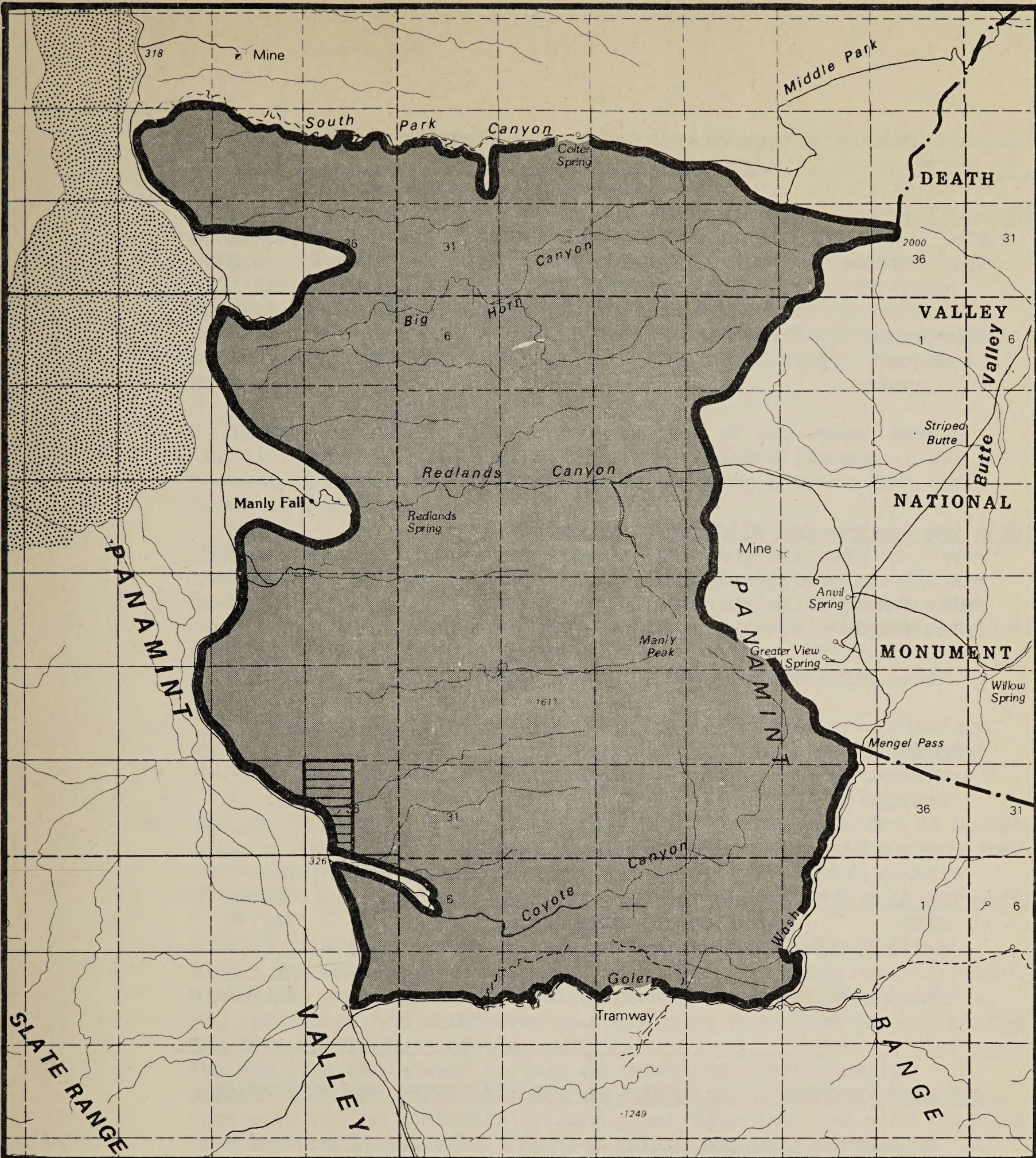
(1) the area possesses marginal wilderness values; (2) wilderness designation of this WSA would not add any additional unique or distinct ecosystems or features to the National Wilderness Preservation System; and (3) the area has moderate to high potential for locatable minerals. There are approximately seven miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.

Manly Peak WSA's ecosystem is well represented by other areas recommended for wilderness designation in the general region. This WSA contains no noteworthy special features to set it apart from other areas; its physical, biological, and cultural resources are typical of the surrounding desert mountain ranges. The study area is not known habitat of any State- or Federally-listed threatened or endangered plant or wildlife species, or of any species under status review for possible listing. Cultural resources consist mainly of historic mining operations, which are ubiquitous throughout the region and do not particularly need wilderness designation to ensure their integrity.

The natural condition of the WSA has been altered by decades of mining activity. The northern, western, and southern edges of the study area have numerous mining scars, evidence of mining activity from the turn of the century to the present day. Additional roads and mines have been excluded from the WSA, but their presence and use immediately outside the boundary detracts from the opportunities for solitude within the area.

Significant portions of the study area have moderate to high potential for gold, silver, copper, lead, zinc and dolomite, as described in the section of this report entitled "Energy and Mineral Resource Values." There are 87 mining claims located in the WSA. Exercise of valid existing rights could be expected to entail operations that would drastically alter naturalness, and affect opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. Maintenance of these wilderness values would be both difficult and costly because of the area's mineral potential.





R44E R45E

R45E R46E

NONE

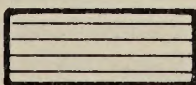
RECOMMENDED FOR  
WILDERNESS



SPLIT ESTATE



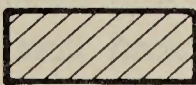
RECOMMENDED FOR  
NONWILDERNESS



STATE

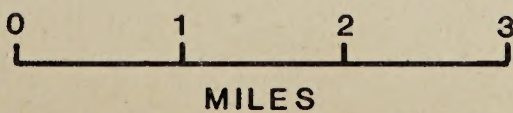


LAND OUTSIDE WSA  
RECOMMENDED FOR  
WILDERNESS

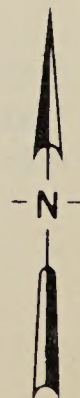


PRIVATE

Manly Peak  
Proposal  
MAP-1



MILES



CDCA-137  
JUNE, 1988



TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	31,754
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		272
Private		0
Total		<u>32,026</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	31,754
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>31,754</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The area shows evidence of past human activity. Mining scars are the most noticeable evidence of man's activities within the WSA. Near the north boundary in T. 45 E., R 22 S., Sections 29 and 30, is an old aerial tramway and mine, along with numerous scattered prospects. An old mine, road, and aerial tramway exists in T. 23 S., R. 44 R., Sections 13, 23, and 24. The original access road to the mine from the west boundary has deteriorated into a way with the passage of time, although a newer bladed road has been constructed from Manly Falls to the above-



mentioned mine complex for approximately one-quarter mile. Several small adits exist along this road. Mining activity has occurred in Coyote Canyon as evidenced by a washed out route, an old mine, and tramway. The southern border shows a loss of naturalness with many small mines and tramways scattered throughout the north side of the canyon. The eastern border of the WSA is relatively natural. One well-travelled way extends from Death Valley National Monument into the WSA in the upper reaches of Redlands Canyon for approximately one and one-half miles. This way also extends into Wood Canyon for approximately one mile and cuts into an unnamed canyon for one-half mile.

2. Solitude: Because of the screening effect of the steep, rugged terrain, opportunities for solitude can be found throughout the WSA. However, the many mining scars mentioned above detract from the sense of remoteness.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: Opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation exist within the WSA; however, the area presently attracts almost no primitive recreational use.
4. Special Features: The western portion of the WSA provides 24 square miles of permanent range and 16 square miles of transient range for the Panamint Mountains desert bighorn sheep herd, which numbers about 225 individuals.

Minimal inventory has been conducted of the cultural resources within the WSA; however, many of the relics of mining activity are historical resources. Some of the mines, tramways, mining trails, and remains of old structures and equipment scattered throughout the WSA date to the turn of the century.

The WSA includes a wide variety of resources traditionally exploited by the Panamint Shoshone. Bighorn sheep, deer, and other game were hunted historically, and plant materials and bird feathers have been collected here. Springs in the area have religious significance.

## B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 15,240 acres of the American Desert/Western Ponderosa Forest and 16,514 acres of the American Desert/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland ecosystems. Although the



WSA would add diversity in the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS, the Bureau has recommended one WSA with a similar ecosystem for (Wildrose Canyon WSA) as suitable for wilderness designation.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Western Ponderosa Forest	0	0	3	56,622
American Desert/Juniper- Pinyon Woodland	1	21,485	24	690,457
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Western Ponderosa Forest	0	0	3	56,622
American Desert/Juniper- Pinyon Woodland	1	21,485	16	469,206

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a days driving time (five hours) of major population centers:  
The WSA is within a five-hour drive of six major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of wilderness areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of these population centers.

Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

<u>Population Centers</u>	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921



3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The closest designated area is the Domeland Wilderness administered by the Sequoia National Forest, approximately 60 air miles west. The WSA borders directly on administratively-endorsed wilderness in Death Valley National Monument. In addition, ten BLM study areas recommended for wilderness designation are within 50 air miles.

#### C. Manageability

The Manly Peak WSA is manageable as wilderness. However, the maintenance of wilderness values cannot be assured unless the possibility of future mineral development can be eliminated, which would require acquisition of valid existing rights.

Although wilderness designation would withdraw the area from claim location, BLM's assessment of the area's mineral potential suggests that some of the existing claims would prove valid. Holders of valid claims would be able to proceed with developments deemed necessary or reasonably incidental to their mining operation, subject only to not causing unnecessary or undue degradation. This provision would do little to protect wilderness values, because even necessary mining developments could significantly alter natural conditions at the site, and potentially disrupt opportunities for solitude over a much greater area.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

#### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: In 1980, BLM prepared a Geology-Energy-Mineral (G-E-M) Report for the Panamint Mountains G-E-M Resource Area (GRA), of which the WSA is a part. Mineral potentials assigned by the GRA Report are shown on Map 2, which follows. The GRA Report classified the western portion of the WSA as having a high potential for the occurrence of gold and silver and a moderate potential for the occurrence of lead, zinc, and tungsten. The eastern portion of the WSA was classified as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of gold, silver, lead, zinc and tungsten. Two smaller areas in the extreme southern portion of the WSA, near Goler and Coyote Canyons, were classified as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of gold and silver. In addition, an area within Coyote Canyon was classified as having a high potential for the occurrence of dolomite.

These assessments of potential were based partially on past production. The WSA was known to have produced gold, silver, lead, zinc and dolomite, and future production of these commodities was considered likely. Eight known mines and as many as 19 mines or prospects exist in this WSA for gold, silver, zinc, and/or lead. Although production from the mines inside this WSA is unknown, the Southern Homestake Mine,



adjacent to the WSA at Manly Falls, has estimated reserves of 49,000 ounces of gold. The Honolulu-Bighorn Mine, adjacent to the WSA in South Park Canyon, has produced 550,000 pounds of zinc, 350,000 pounds of lead and 5,000 ounces of silver (1980 BLM GRA file). As of December 1979, an estimated 50 to 100 unpatented mining claims and two patented claims were located within the WSA.

The central and southeastern portions of the WSA were classified by the GRA Report as having a low potential for the occurrence of metallic mineral deposits. However, the report noted that the geologic environment in these areas were extremely favorable for deposits of this type.

The WSA was not classified for the occurrence of leasable minerals (sodium, potassium, oil, gas, and geothermal) and saleable minerals (sand, gravel, clay) because of insufficient data.

The 1980 BLM GRA file documented a geochemical anomaly for copper in a geologic environment favorable for the formation of this type deposit in the west-central portion of the WSA. Based on the BLM classification system, this area (See Map 2) is classified as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of copper.

2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should be Considered in the Final Decision: No U.S. Geologic Survey (USGS) or U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral surveys have been conducted in the WSA because it is recommended nonsuitable. The California Division of Mines and Geology has begun field work for a Mineral Land Classification of the WSA and the surrounding area. The results of this study are expected in early 1989.

In December 1987, Billiton Exploration Co., Inc. (formerly Shell Mining) submitted a plan of operation for exploration drilling at the Southern Homestake Mine in an area immediately adjacent to the WSA boundary. Although the results of the drilling program have not been made public, Billiton has been in contact with the BLM Ridgecrest Resource Area office (January 1988) to seek assistance in submitting a plan of operation for drilling inside the WSA. Billiton has indicated that a favorable geologic structure discovered during the December, 1987 drilling may extend into the WSA.

Unpatented lode mining claims and mill site locations are concentrated in the north, east, west and south boundary areas of the WSA. Unpatented placer mining claims are concentrated in the northwestern portion of the WSA in South Park Canyon. Unpatented mining claims within the WSA, from BLM records as of January, 1988, are summarized in the following table.



Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
MINING CLAIM						
Lode	N/A	72	72	N/A	1,440	1,440
Placer	N/A	7	7	N/A	280	280
Mill Site	N/A	8	8	N/A	40	40
Total	N/A	87	87	N/A	1,760	1,760

E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Solitude will continue to be interrupted by military jet aircraft as it is at present. Wilderness values will decline over the long-term as exploration and development occurs in areas of moderate to high mineral potential. Wilderness values will be retained at existing levels in the portions of the WSA not affected by mining.
2. Impact on Locatable Mineral Exploration and Development: The proposed action will have no impact. Further exploration, as well as development of the 87 existing claims, can proceed subject to applicable laws and guidelines defined in the CDCA Plan.
3. Impact on Bighorn Sheep Population: Future planned actions will be subject to environmental analysis to identify any potential impacts to desert bighorn sheep, allowing development and implementation of appropriate mitigation measures. Development of minerals has moderate potential to adversely impact bighorn sheep habitat.
4. Impact on Native American Uses and Values: Native American access to traditional collection and religious sites will be retained. Sacred features will be subject to protection under the American Indian Religious Freedom Act. Any changes in physical appearance or use of sacred sites will be made only in consultation with the appropriate Native American group.
5. Impact on Administratively-Endorsed Wilderness in Death Valley National Monument: Mining operations within the WSA will result in negligible adverse impacts to opportunities for solitude within the Butte Valley area of the national monument. The ridgeline that forms the boundary between the two jurisdictions will effectively screen nearly all potential mining operations so they will not be visible or audible within the monument. It should be noted that the portions of the WSA deemed to have high mineral potential (for gold, silver, and dolomite) are well away from the national monument boundary, on the west side of the WSA. The portion of the WSA adjacent to the monument has moderate potential for gold and silver.





<b>NONE</b>	Recommended for Wilderness
	Recommended for Non Wilderness
	Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness
	Split Estate
	State
	Private

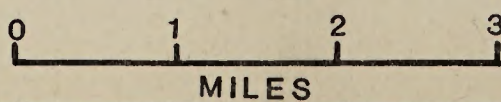
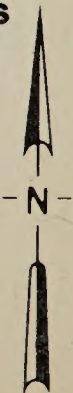
### Manly Peak Mineral Resource Potential

### Explanation

	High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
	Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
<b>M</b>	Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area
<b>H</b>	High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area

### Commodity Symbols

<b>Ag</b>	Silver
<b>Au</b>	Gold
<b>Cu</b>	Copper
<b>Do</b>	Dolomite
<b>Pb</b>	Lead
<b>W</b>	Tungsten
<b>Zn</b>	Zinc



MAP-2  
CDCA-137



F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Known inaccuracies are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: Many comments were received relating to the existing roads, mines and other permanent structures. Field examination verified many of these, causing the division of the original inventory area into two separate wilderness study areas, CDCA-137 and CDCA-137A. Other comments recognized the primitive recreation potential and overall natural condition of the landscape.
2. Study Phase: A large majority of the respondents recommended excluding this WSA from wilderness consideration. Thirty-two out of forty responses took this position, mostly because of the area's high mineralization. Roads, mine dumps and buildings were said to be present in large numbers and to be incompatible with wilderness. Many mine owners and operators sent maps and photos of their locations and urged exclusion of these areas. South Park and Goler Wash were mentioned by several writers as being extensively impacted by mining activities. Some respondents also wished to keep out recreationists in order to cut down vandalism. They believed that miners could aid BLM in managing these lands for the benefit of both natural resources and mineral development.

One respondent complained that management of this area, along with adjacent Naval Weapons Center and Death Valley National Monument, all by separate federal agencies, would be too costly to the taxpayers. Several members of a four-wheel drive organization wanted the area to be available for vehicle-oriented recreation, including four-wheeling, trail riding, rockhounding, prospecting, hunting, photography, sightseeing, nature study, and camping.

The comments favoring wilderness designation also discussed the area's contiguity to Death Valley National Monument; they found this to be an advantage, since BLM wilderness would join with Death Valley wilderness, thus enhancing management of the area. Scenic, ecologic, geologic, historic, educational, and botanic resources were mentioned as qualifications for wilderness status. There was disagreement as to whether the South Fork Canyon Road connects with the road through Pleasant Canyon. One respondent thought the entire road should be a corridor through the area.



Nine letters were received in response to the Public Input Workbook of 3/15/79, four favoring and five opposed to wilderness designation.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: A variety of comments were received in response to the Draft CDCA Plan. One indicated complete agreement with the Protection Alternative, another expressed a need for more wilderness than that recommended by the Protection Alternative, and another favored the Use Alternative. Others called for recommending the entire study area and/or greater acreage of non-mountainous terrain as suitable for wilderness under the Balanced Alternative. One respondent stated that the area does not qualify as wilderness because of the many signs of man and mining development.

This WSA was one of those opposed by the national Outdoor Coalition, a coalition of mining, rockhounding, and off-highway vehicle groups. A large number of club members sent in printed coupons and letters supporting this position. The County of Inyo Board of Supervisors also opposed wilderness because of mineral resources.

Conservation organizations and their members wrote many letters recommending wilderness designation for all WSAs within the CDCA.

4. Proposed Plan: Comments brought out the same points summarized for earlier stages of the planning process. Motorized vehicle organizations and conservation groups maintained the same positions stated for the Draft Plan Alternatives, as did the County of Inyo Board of Supervisors.



# **Middle Park Canyon**

*CDCA 137A*



Middle Park  
Canyon

2000



## MIDDLE PARK CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-137A)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA ---

9,563 acres

The Middle Park Canyon WSA is located in Inyo County in the west-central portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The nearest community is Trona, located approximately 15 miles to the southwest. The WSA includes 9,538 acres of public land, administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and private inholdings totalling 25 acres (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA is bounded on the north by topographic features; for half its distance, the boundary skirts the north slope of Middle Park Canyon, then crosses over the ridge to follow the south side of Pleasant Canyon. The eastern boundary lies along the ridgeline between Pleasant Canyon and Middle Park. From Middle Park, the boundary proceeds south along a road leading to South Park. The southern boundary follows an improved dirt road through South Park Canyon. One short cherrystem, located along this road, eliminates the Suitcase Mine prospects from the WSA. The eastern boundary follows a maintained dirt road leading to Ballarat. A second cherrystem, slightly more than a mile in length, is located along this western boundary.

The WSA is composed of small alluvial slopes in the lower western elevations which rise eastward to steep, jagged ridges and sharp peaks of the Panamint Mountains. In the higher elevations, deep, dissected canyons form the interior of the WSA. Elevations range from 1,040 feet in the western portion to 7,000 feet in the eastern portion of the WSA. A variety of vegetation exists within the area. The vegetative sequence begins with sparse desert scrub, such as creosote and annual plants, in the lower elevations and drainages, then moves up to pinyon-juniper woodland in the higher elevations. Water flows intermittently in Middle Park Canyon and South Park Canyon located near the WSA's northern and southern boundaries.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced, and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0 acres recommended for wilderness

9,538 BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.



The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally-preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan and further explained in the California Wilderness Study Overview.

This area is recommended nonsuitable because: (1) while the WSA did meet the criteria of wilderness as defined in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964, further analysis determined that the area's value as wilderness did not exceed the potential for other uses, particularly mining - the area possesses areas of high and moderate mineral potential, and (2) the area would be extremely difficult to manage. There are approximately four miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.

The natural condition of the WSA has been altered by numerous mining scars. The areas where the worst surface disturbance has occurred are located around the boundaries of the WSA where intense mining, milling and exploration have taken place. Some of the primitive ways, constructed to support these historic mining activities, wind their way into the WSA for several miles. These scars impair the naturalness of the area. Outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation are minimal. The area's small size and its thin, linear shape relegate outstanding opportunities for solitude to within the confines of the canyons.

This WSA contains areas of high potential for the occurrence of gold and silver and areas of moderate potential for the occurrence of copper, gold, lead, potassium, silver, sodium, tungsten, and zinc. Development of much of this mineral potential would be foregone should the area be designated as wilderness. A more detailed discussion of this topic is included in Energy and Mineral Resource Values.

Effective management of the area as wilderness would be difficult due to the potential for mineral activity. There are 176 mining claims located in the WSA. In addition, there are several current mining operations either in the WSA or adjacent to it. The amount of mining activity in the area fluctuates with the minerals market, intensifying when the market is high, slowing with economic lows. This fluctuating interest plus utilization of valid, existing rights may result in mining operations which could drastically alter the wilderness characteristics of the area and seriously impair our ability to manage the area as wilderness.





NONE

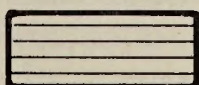
RECOMMENDED FOR  
WILDERNESS



SPLIT ESTATE



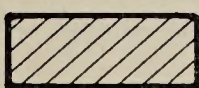
RECOMMENDED FOR  
NONWILDERNESS



STATE

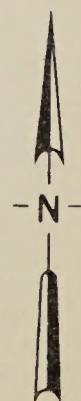
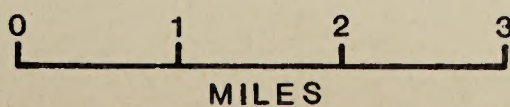


LAND OUTSIDE WSA  
RECOMMENDED FOR  
WILDERNESS



PRIVATE

**Middle Park Canyon  
Proposal  
MAP-1**



CDCA-137A  
JUNE, 1988



TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	9,538
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		25
Total		<u>9,563</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	9,538
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>9,538</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The area shows evidence of man's work, of which mining scars are the most noticeable. The scars left behind include old, benched mill sites with associated tanks and storage pads and segments of primitive ways and well-established vehicle routes, some extending several miles into the study area.
2. Solitude: Opportunities for solitude are available throughout the unit but cannot be considered outstanding. The area is only one to two miles wide. Therefore, opportunities for solitude are severely limited to the confines of the deep canyons within the WSA.



This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: Opportunities for unrestricted movement are obtainable throughout the area. The deep canyons provide primitive areas for unconfined recreation.
4. Special Features: The area falls within the permanent range of the Panamint herd of desert bighorn sheep (Ovis canadensis nelsoni). The Panamint herd, numbering over 200 individuals, range throughout the Panamint Mountains. Bighorn sheep are considered a sensitive species by BLM.

One BLM sensitive plant species is known to occur within this WSA. Brickellia knappiana is found in lower Pleasant Canyon.

Two areas of cultural sensitivity are located in this WSA. One contains a number of mining camps and structures from the late 1800's and early 1900's. The second area is comprised of areas of aboriginal activity involving food gathering and processing. This WSA also includes areas of significance for Panamint Shoshone Native Americans. The southern Panamints contain traditional pinyon collecting areas. Other materials collected include Balleva grass, bunch grass, chia and willow.

#### B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 4,470 acres of the American Desert/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland and 5,068 acres of the American Desert/Western Ponderosa Forest ecosystems. Although the WSA would add diversity in the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS the Bureau has recommended one WSA with a similar ecosystem (Wildrose Canyon WSA) as suitable for wilderness designation. The ecosystem--is also typical of the entire Panamint Mountain Range and other Basin and Range Province Mountains found through the Mojave Desert.



Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	1	21,485	24	702,616
American Desert/Western Ponderosa Forest	0	0	3	66,926
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	1	21,485	16	481,365
American Desert/Western Ponderosa Forest	0	0	3	66,926

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of six major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

<u>Population Centers</u>	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of ten BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness area is South Sierra Wilderness Area, administered by Sequoia National Forest, located roughly 50 miles west.



### C. Manageability

The Middle Park Canyon WSA is manageable as wilderness. However, effective management of the WSA would be difficult due to recurrent mining activity throughout the WSA. Economic lows in the minerals market have caused slowdowns or stoppage of exploration at times, but as the mineral economy rallies, exploration and production increases dramatically. Many of the claims within the WSA are pre-FLPMA and may have valid, existing rights. Mining exploration and development within the WSA would cause management problems due to the noise, dust and physical intrusions caused by roads, buildings and facilities associated with mining operations.

The WSA would also be difficult to manage because of its long, linear proportions. The area is only one to two miles wide and any infringement on the borders would effect adjacent wilderness values causing management problems. Frequent signing, detailed maps and intensive patrolling along much of the border would be required to ensure the integrity of the unit.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The Middle Park Canyon WSA is in the BLM Panamint Mountain Geology-Energy-Resource (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). The BLM G-E-M narrative in the CDCA Plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) in 1980, stated that the WSA has potential for the occurrence of gold, silver, zinc, lead and tungsten. As of December 12, 1979, 13 patented and an unknown number of a larger block of 209 unpatented mining claims located in and adjacent to the WSA were recorded with the BLM.

The 1980 BLM GRA report and file data fully support the G-E-M statement in the CDCA Plan EIS. The 1980 BLM GRA report classified the central portion of the WSA as having a high potential for the occurrence of gold and silver and a moderate potential for the occurrence of lead, zinc and tungsten (See Map 2). A smaller area surrounding the Suitcase Mine, near the southern boundary of the WSA, was classified by the 1980 BLM GRA report as having a high potential for the occurrence of gold, based on past production from the mine. The eastern one-third of the WSA was classified by the 1980 BLM GRA report as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of gold, silver, lead, zinc, and tungsten.

The area between Pleasant and South Park Canyons in the WSA is encompassed by the Ballarat Gold Mining District. Within the Ballarat District, there are five mines with a history of production of gold. One mine, the Red Cloud Mine, produced zinc, lead and



silver. Gold production from the Suitcase, Radcliffe, World Beater, and the Cecil R. Mines have a recorded production in excess of 85,000 ounces. The Suitcase Mine is estimated to have an ore reserve of 14,000 ounces (1980 BLM GRA report).

In addition, the 1980 BLM GRA report documented a geochemical anomaly for copper in the northern half of the WSA.

The western one-fifth of the WSA, west of the Cecil R. Mine, was classified by the 1980 BLM GRA report as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of sodium and potassium. This classification was based on the designation of the area by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS Conservation Div., 1979) as prospectively valuable for these minerals.

A large area in the center of the WSA was classified as having a low potential for the occurrence of limestone and dolomite based on a very favorable geologic environment.

The 1980 BLM GRA file data documented a geochemical anomaly for copper in the northern half of the WSA. Under the BLM classification system, this area can be classified as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of copper based on a favorable geologic environment and geochemical evidence (See Map 2).

Data from the 1980 BLM GRA file was incomplete, and the area was not classified for the occurrence of saleable minerals, oil and gas, and uranium/thorium potential.

2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should Be Considered in the Final Recommendation: No U.S. Geologic Survey (USGS) or U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral surveys have been conducted for the WSA because the area was recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

The California Division of Mines and Geology has begun field work for a Mineral Land Classification of the area encompassing and surrounding the WSA. The results of this study are expected in early 1989.

Since 1980, five Plans of Operation for exploration activities have been filed with the BLM Ridgecrest Resource Area office. Two of the plans have addressed exploration activities at the Suitcase Mine in an area classified by the 1980 BLM GRA report as having a high potential for the occurrence of gold.

Millsite locations are concentrated in the northern portion of the WSA in Pleasant Canyon, and in the southern portion of the WSA in Middle Park Canyon. Unpatented lode mining claims are distributed



throughout the WSA. Unpatented placer mining claims are concentrated in the west and southwest portions of the WSA. Unpatented mining claims in the WSA are summarized in Table 4, taken from BLM records dated December, 1978.

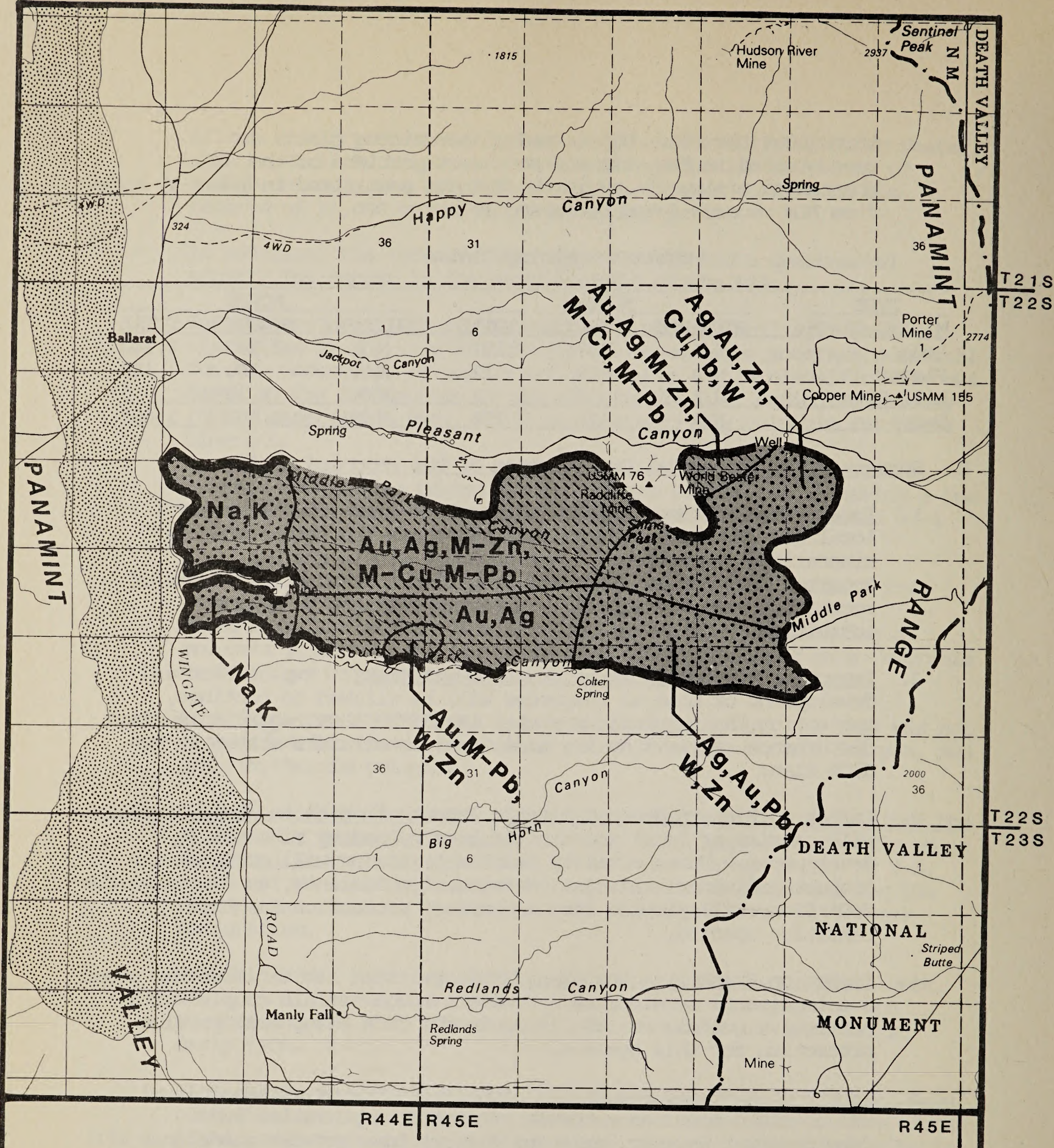
Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
Lode	N/A	157	157	N/A	3,140	3,140
Placer	N/A	12	12	N/A	480	480
Mill Site	N/A	7	7	N/A	35	35
Total	N/A	176	176	N/A	3,655	3,655

E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Mineral development will cause localized impacts to naturalness. Because the entire area is mineralized, impacts may occur anywhere within the WSA. Opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation will be negatively affected adjacent to mining activities.
2. Impact on Mineral Exploration and Development: Exploration and development of mineral resources will be allowed to continue, subject to the regulations stated in 43 CFR 3809 regarding surface disturbance, as well as any additional constraints stated in the CDCA Plan.
3. Impact on Bighorn Sheep Habitat: Impacts to bighorn sheep habitat will consist of localized habitat loss caused by mineral development. Human activity related to mining will occasionally disrupt individual animals. Management guidelines, as listed in the CDCA Plan, will provide some measure of protection for this sensitive species.
4. Impact on Brickellia knappiana/Habitat: Some habitat loss may occur due to mineral development. However, rough terrain coupled with protective guidelines, as listed in the CDCA Plan, will provide protection for this species.
5. Impact on Cultural Resources: Localized loss of archaeological values could occur as a result of mineral exploration and development. However, existing Federal laws and BLM guidelines will lessen the rate of this loss by requiring mitigation of impacts.
6. Impact on Native American Collection Activities: The proposed action will have no impact on this activity. Collection activities will be allowed to continue and access to the collection areas will remain open.

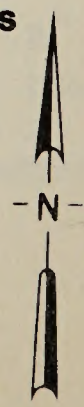




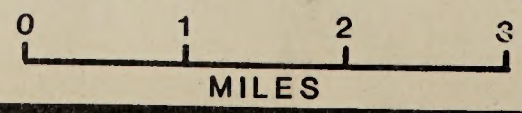
- NONE Recommended for Wilderness
- Recommended for Non Wilderness
- Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness
- Split Estate
- State
- Private

- Explanation**
- High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
  - Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
  - M** Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area
  - H** High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area

- Commodity Symbols**
- Ag** Silver
  - Au** Gold
  - Cu** Copper
  - K** Potassium
  - Na** Sodium
  - Pb** Lead
  - W** Tungsten
  - Zn** Zinc



**Middle Park Canyon  
Mineral Resource Potential**



**MAP-2  
CDCA-137A**



F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: During the inventory period, this WSA was still part of Manly Peak WSA. Many comments were received concerning existing mines, roads and permanent structures. Particular attention was given to the roads in Pleasant Canyon and South Fork Canyon, and the possibility that these connected. Field examination verified the continuity of this road, and the large area was divided into Manly Peak WSA and this WSA. Other comments recognized the primitive recreation potential and overall natural condition of the landscape.
2. Study Phase: A large majority of the public comments recommended excluding this WSA from wilderness consideration. Twenty-eight out of 35 responses took this position, mostly because of the area's high mineralization and the existing roads, mine dumps and other evidences of man's activities. Several mine owners and operators sent maps and photos of their locations and urged exclusion of these areas. South Park Canyon and Pleasant Canyon were mentioned repeatedly as being extensively impacted by mining activities. Some respondents also wished to exclude recreationists in order to decrease vandalism. They believed that miners could aid the BLM in managing these lands for the benefit of both natural resources and mineral development.

The noise and sonic booms produced by weapons testing at Fort Irwin and training jets from the Naval Weapons Center were seen as incompatible with the wilderness experience. Several members of a four-wheel drive organization wanted the area to be available for vehicle-oriented recreation, including rockhounding, four-wheeling, pleasure driving, photography, nature study, trail riding, prospecting, hunting and camping. The economies of the town of Ballarat and Indian Wells were said to depend on the use of off-road vehicles in the Panamint Range.

Proponents of wilderness designation mentioned scenic ecologic, historic educational, and botanic resources as qualifications for wilderness status.



Four responses to the Public Input Workbook (3/15/79) referred specifically to this WSA. One stated a strong desire to designate the area as wilderness because of the rich endemic plant species and diverse wildlife. One mentioned ownership of patented property at Clair Camp (mining interest) and opposed wilderness designation in order to eliminate trespassing and vandalism.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: No public comments specific to this WSA were received in response to the Draft Plan Alternatives. However, this WSA was one of those opposed by the National Outdoor Coalition, a coalition of mining, rock-hounding, and off-road vehicle groups. A large number of club members sent in printed coupons and letters supporting this position. Conservation organizations and their members wrote many letters recommending wilderness designation for all WSAs within the CDCA. The County of Inyo's Board of Supervisors opposed wilderness designation for this area because of its mineral potential.
4. Proposed Plan: There were few specific comments on this particular WSA in response to the Proposed Plan. Motorized vehicle organizations and conservation groups maintained the same positions stated for the Draft Alternatives, as did the Inyo County Board of Supervisors. The Resources Agency of the State of California requested wilderness for this area.



# **Slate Range**

*CDCA 142*







## SLATE RANGE WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-142)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA ---

102,802 acres

The Slate Range WSA is located in Inyo County in the north-central portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The closest community is Trona, located roughly 30 miles to the southwest. The WSA includes 100,565 acres of public land, under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), 1,837 acres of State lands and private inholdings totalling 400 acres (See Map 1 and Table 1).

This "L"-shaped WSA is bounded on the northwest by a dirt road crossing the Panamint Valley to Ballarat. From this point, the northern boundary heads south, following Wingate Road, until it is intersected by a road up Goler Wash. Trending north, the boundary then roughly follows Goler Wash road, avoiding disturbed areas around Meyer Ranch, until the road reaches the Death Valley National Monument Boundary. The monument boundary delineates the eastern WSA boundary. To the south, the boundary follows the edge of the China Lake Naval Weapons Center. The western boundary follows the ridgeline of the Slate Range, eliminating one area of disturbance with a short cherrystem. Midway along its length, the western boundary drops over the ridge and then follows a number of dirt roads until it closes with the northwestern boundary.

The terrain of this area is diverse and includes the Slate and Panamint Mountains and their associated canyons and bajadas. The area also includes Panamint Valley and a large salt pan located just east of the Slate Range. The Slate and Panamint Mountains are varied in topography, having smooth and jagged ridges, sharp peaks, flat mountain tops, shallow washes and steep canyons. The mountains are rocky and display a variety of colors from tan to red to gold. The associated bajada gently slopes south and east into Panamint Valley and is interlaced with very shallow washes. The valley contains a large salt pan in the eastern portion. The vegetation consists mainly of low desert scrub, with the dominant plant being creosote bush. There are a few scattered cholla in the bajada. The area is unusually diverse, representing a cross-section of Great Basin Lowland and Upland Desert conditions. The elevation varies with the low flatlands averaging 2,400 ft rising to 5,805 ft. at Needle Peak.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced, and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

44,536	acres recommended for wilderness
56,029	BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness



Partial Wilderness (40% suitable) is the recommendation for this WSA. The 56,029 acres in this WSA recommended nonsuitable are released for uses other than wilderness. The majority of the suitable portion consists of public lands. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative as outlined in the Desert Plan and further explained in the California Wilderness Study Overview.

The eastern portion of this WSA is recommended suitable because it possesses outstanding wilderness values and numerous special features that would be enhanced by wilderness designation. The wilderness values of naturalness, opportunities for solitude and opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation are outstanding within the suitably recommended area. There are no known routes of travel within the suitable portion of the WSA.

Lacking virtually any type of vehicle access, the area escaped from man's impacts. Remote and inaccessible terrain have acted as an impenetrable barrier to human activities, leaving the area in a primitive condition.

Opportunities for solitude are outstanding; the feeling of aloneness is easily achieved. The broken terrain provides countless hideaways where seclusion can be found. The study area's remote locale deters all but the most avid back-country recreationists, so it is rare when more than a handful of people share this large tract.

Primitive recreation opportunities are available throughout the suitable area. The lack of man-made obstacles lends to a sense of freedom and unconfinement. Because this area is adjacent to administratively-endorsed wilderness areas in Death Valley National Monument, opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation are enhanced.

The area includes several special features that would benefit from wilderness designation of the area. These special features include a bighorn sheep herd and areas of cultural sensitivity and/or significance. The special features are further explained in the Wilderness Characteristics section.

Within the suitable area, there are few resource conflicts. The main conflict involves loss of opportunities for mineral exploration and development. Within the suitable area, there are two small areas with mineral potential: one area on the western boundary possesses high potential for the occurrence of gold, silver, copper, lead and tungsten; the second area, near the northern border, has moderate potential for the occurrence of silver and gold. Interest in developing these mineral reserves is low at this time, as witnessed by the lack of mining claims in the area.



The remaining acreage within the study area is recommended as nonsuitable because, although its wilderness values are of good quality, it possesses significant areas of high mineral potential. Within the nonsuitable area, there are geologic formations which possess high potential for the occurrence of sodium, potassium, silver, gold, copper lead, tungsten and limestone, as well as moderate potential for the occurrence of geothermal resources, silver, gold, lead, zinc, sodium and potassium. Interest in developing these minerals is indicated by the number of mining claims located in the nonsuitable area; a total of 180 as of December, 1987. There are approximately 40 miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access within the nonsuitable area which will remain available for vehicular use.

Although this area possesses wilderness values that satisfy the 2(c) criteria of the 1964 Wilderness Act, these values did not override the value of the mineral reserves of the Slate Range and the Panamint Valley. These reserves cover roughly 60% of the entire nonsuitable acreage.







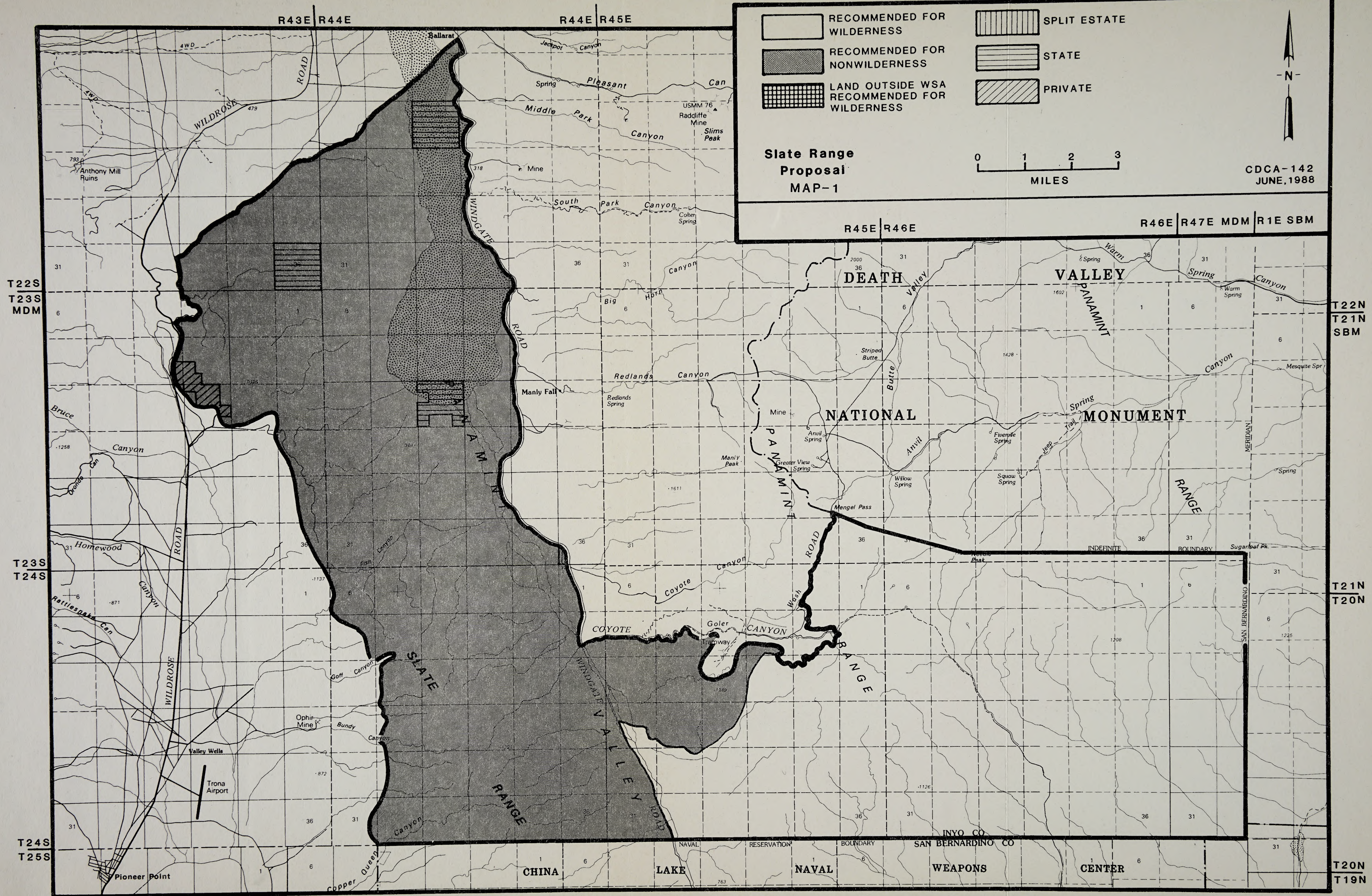








TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	100,565
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		1,837
Private		400
Total		<u>102,802</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	44,536
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>44,536</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	56,029
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>56,029</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The suitable area possesses pristine conditions characterized by diverse and rugged terrain. This area is totally affected by pristine natural forces. The nonsuitable area is equally as natural throughout most locations. A few primitive ways provide access to Panamint Dry Lake and an assortment of mining scars can be found in the Slate Range, but these imprint's of man are substantially unnoticeable.



2. Solitude: With the diverse terrain, high peaks and steep canyons, outstanding opportunities for solitude are present throughout. The rugged topography acts to screen visitors from one another. Conversely, the open lowlands of Panamint Valley allow expansive vistas of the Panamint, Slate and Argus Ranges.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The diversity of landforms and the pristine condition lend themselves to primitive types of recreation. Opportunities are further enhanced by adjacent values found in the administratively-endorsed wilderness areas located in Death Valley National Monument.
4. Special Features: The most significant wildlife species within this WSA is the desert bighorn sheep (Ovis canadensis nelsoni). The population size fluctuates, but numbers approximately 20 sheep. Desert bighorn are considered a sensitive species by California BLM. At least one prairie falcon nesting site exists inside this area. Prairie falcons and golden eagles utilize the area for foraging on a regular basis.

The south end of the Panamint Range within this area contains resources traditionally exploited by Owens Valley Paiute and Panamint Shoshone Native Americans from the Death Valley area. Vegetative material continues to be collected from the Needles Peak area. There are two known cultural resources sites located in the suitable wilderness study area. Although little is known about this area, favorable indications do exist for additional sites.

#### B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 100,565 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush (Larrea) ecosystem. Landforms consist of extremely rugged, steep canyons with an associated bajada which contains Creosote bush, Sagebrush and Juniper-pinyon woodlands. Designation of this area as wilderness would not add diversity to the National Wilderness Preservation System.



Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,167,344
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,553,540

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a days driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of seven major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

<u>Population Centers</u>	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of 11 BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. Roughly 50 miles west lie the closest designated wilderness areas, South Sierra and Domeland Wilderness Areas, both administered by Sequoia National Forest.

#### C. Manageability

The Slate Range WSA is manageable as wilderness. However, management of the nonsuitable portion would be extremely difficult.



Within the suitable portion, there are no major issues that would preclude or complicate the effective management of the area as wilderness. The area possesses easily managed boundaries consisting of administrative boundaries along the north, east and south and a well defined road along the western boundary. The surrounding public land, administered by the National Park Service and the military, prevents vehicles from accessing the suitable area, thereby reducing the possibility of inadvertent intrusions.

The area contains virtually no resources or uses which would conflict with wilderness designation. The suitable portion contains no private or State inholdings.

Conversely, the unsuitable area would be extremely difficult to manage, primarily because of mineral exploration and development activities that will occur there. The unsuitable portion of the WSA contains over 180 mining claims, many of which may have valid existing rights to develop under the General Mining Law of 1872. Although claimants cannot cause unnecessary or undue degradation to public lands, they may have sufficient latitude to impact existing wilderness values.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

#### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The Slate Range WSA is located in the BLM Darwin/Slate Range and Panamint Geology-Energy-Mineral (G-E-M) Resource Area(s) (GRA). The BLM G-E-M narrative in the wilderness section of the CDCA Plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) stated that mines and prospects located in the WSA have produced gold, silver, and lead (high occurrence potential). The EIS G-E-M narrative also stated that the WSA has a potential for halite, uranium, tungsten, pumice, perlite, bentonite, and zeolites. As of December 12, 1979, an estimated 30 to 50 unpatented mining claims and two patented claims located in the WSA were recorded with the BLM.

The 1980 BLM GRA report and data fully supports the G-E-M statement in the 1980 CDCA EIS. The mines and prospects immediately adjacent to and located in the WSA are encompassed by the Slate (gold) Mining District. Recorded production from the district is in excess of \$3,000,000 of gold, silver, lead and copper. The 1980 BLM GRA report classified the extreme northwestern part of the WSA as having a high potential for the occurrence of gold, silver, copper, lead and tungsten and a low occurrence potential for uranium. The January Jones Mine, located on the eastern slope of the Slate Range, has produced over 4,000 oz. gold from vein deposits in granitic rock. The area surrounding the January Jones Mine was classified by the 1980 BLM GRA report as having high potential for the occurrence of gold. An area of marine rock surrounded by



granite, outcropping on the east side of the Slate Range east of Manley Pass, was classified by the 1980 BLM GRA report as having a low potential for the occurrence of gold, silver, lead, tungsten and uranium based on gamma-ray anomalies and a favorable geologic environment. Two small areas, located in the central part of the WSA south of Goler Canyon, were classified by the 1980 BLM GRA report as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of lead, silver, zinc and a high potential for the occurrence of gold, silver, copper, lead and tungsten. The area of high potential contains mines (Crescent, Lotus,) with recorded production of gold, silver and lead.

The 1980 BLM GRA file documented a U.S. Geological Survey (USGS, Conservation Division, 1979) classification of the northern part of the WSA as prospectively valuable for oil and gas. This area was classified as having a low potential (1980 BLM GRA) for the occurrence of oil and gas based on the BLM classification system. In addition, the USGS classified an area in the extreme northwestern part of the WSA as a Potential Geothermal Resource Area (PGRA). The 1980 BLM GRA report classified the PGRA as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of geothermal resources. The central part of the WSA encompassing the Panamint Valley was classified by the 1980 BLM GRA report as having a high to moderate potential for the occurrence of potassium and sodium and a low potential for zeolites. The high to moderate BLM GRA classification was based on a USGS (1979, Conservation Div.) classification of the area as having known (high) value and prospective (moderate) value for these resources.

The entire southeastern part of the WSA was classified by the 1980 BLM GRA report as having low potential for the occurrence of sand, gravel, clay, cinder, pumice and crushed rock sources. The GRA file documented geologic data that shows volcanic rock types often associated with deposits of these commodities occurring in this part of the WSA.

2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should Be Considered in the Final Decision: In 1983-84, the U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) conducted independent mineral surveys of the portion of the WSA recommended suitable for wilderness designation. Results of the BOM study (Mineral Land Assessment MLA 104-83) were incorporated into a combined USGS/BOM report (Open-File Report 84-754) published by USGS in 1984. The following is a summary of the combined report.

There is no recorded mineral production from the mineral inventory study area and the only evidence of mineral development consists of inactive workings in one small area near the northern border of the WSA. This area, known as the Cliff Spring prospect, was classified as having a low potential for the occurrence of gold and silver. An area in the central part of the mineral inventory study area was



classified as having low potential for the occurrence of copper, molybdenum, gold and silver. A larger area in the central part of the mineral inventory study area was also classified as having a low potential for the occurrence of silver. Two small areas on the extreme western edge of the study area were classified as having a low potential for the occurrence of tungsten, molybdenum, gold, silver and copper.

The USGS combined report stated that the area contains substantial amounts of sand and gravel. The USGS report also stated that no evidence of geothermal resources or fossil fuels were found in the mineral inventory study area. The USGS combined report supports and upgrades the mineral potential of the recommended-suitable portion of the WSA as classified by the 1980 BLM GRA study.

In 1985, the State of California, Division of Mines and Geology (DMG), reviewed the USGS combined report and submitted supplemental data and recommendations to reclassify mineral potential areas identified in the USGS report. The DMG recommended the area surrounding the Cliff Spring prospect be reclassified as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of gold and silver. The attached map is a composite of the 1980 BLM GRA report, the USGS/BOM combined study and the DMG recommendations standardized in accordance with the BLM classification system.

Since 1980, no plans of operation have been filed in the BLM Ridgecrest Resource Area for mining exploration or development. However, an active production operation is ongoing at the Stockwell Mine, located outside the western boundary of the WSA. In 1987, the operator had produced 3,000 oz. of gold from new workings developed at the mine.

The California Division of Mines and Geology has begun field work for a Mineral Land Classification of the area encompassing and surrounding the WSA. The results of this study are expected in early 1989.

An eight acre sodium prospecting permit application is pending in the northwest portion of the WSA.

Unpatented mining claims in the WSA are summarized in the following table taken from BLM records dated January, 1988.



Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
Lode	0	174	174	0	3480	3480
Placer	0	1	1	0	40	40
Mill Site	0	5	5	0	25	25
Total	0	180	180	0	3545	3545

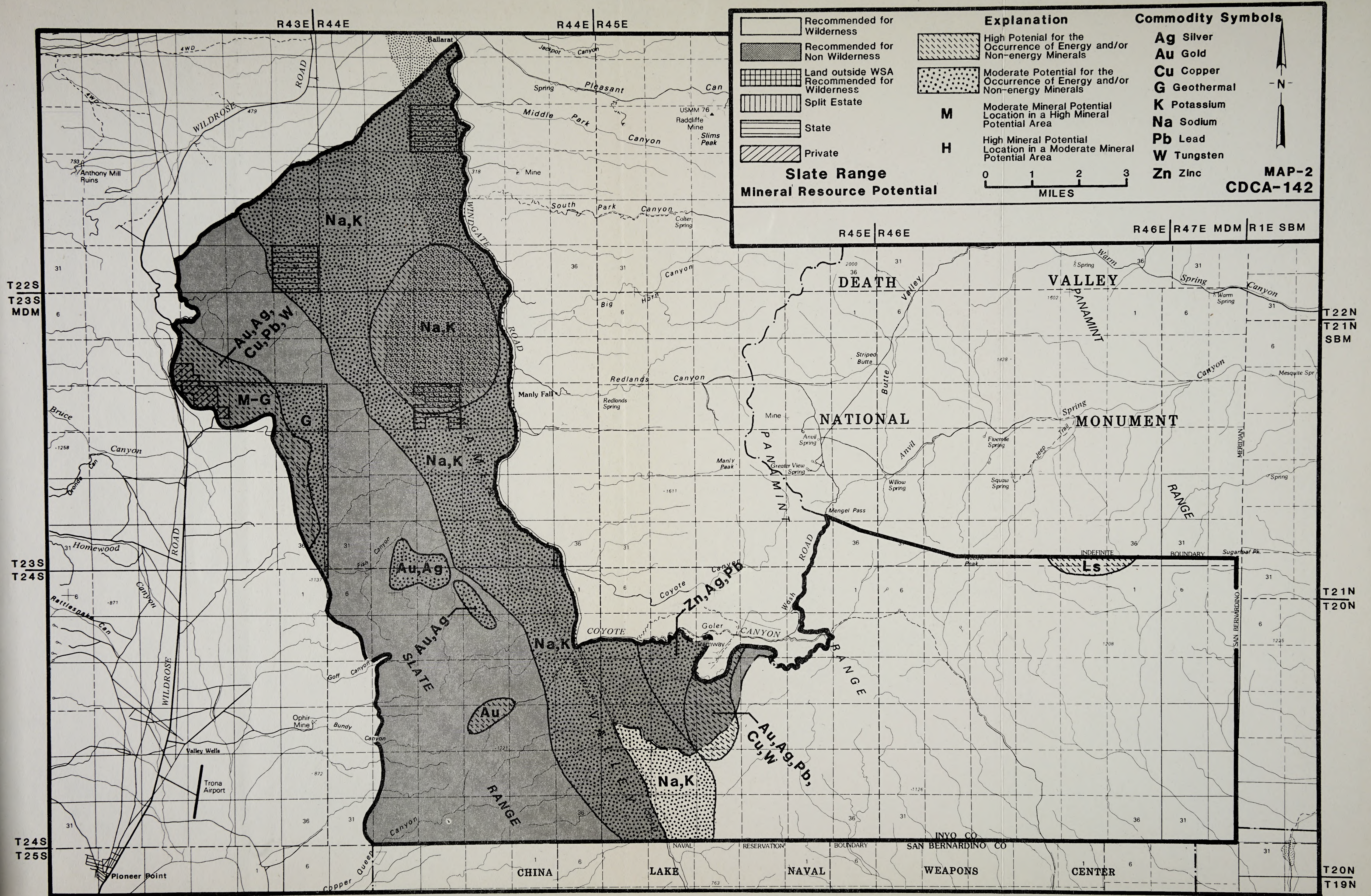
E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: In the suitable area, wilderness values will be maintained. In the nonsuitable areas, naturalness will suffer localized impacts from mineral exploration and development. These impacts will be centered in the mineralized portions of the area, comprising roughly 30% of the WSA.
2. Impact on Mineral Exploration and Development: In the suitable area, this activity will be curtailed. It is not expected to be a significant impact as little potential currently exists and no claims are currently on file. In the nonsuitable area, however, mineral exploration and development will continue to be allowed subject to the regulations listed in 43 CFR 3809 regarding surface disturbance, as well as any additional constraints stated in the CDCA Plan.
3. Impact on Desert Bighorn Sheep/Habitat: The transient habitat in the Slate Range will suffer localized impacts from mineral exploration and development. Within this nonsuitable area, individual animals will occasionally be disturbed by human presence. In the suitable portion of the WSA, bighorn habitat will remain in its current state.
4. Impact on Native American Collection Activities: The proposed action will have negligible effects on Native American collecting activities. In the nonsuitable area, the activities will be allowed to continue as normal. In the suitable area, access is currently constrained because of terrain. Restrictions placed on the use of mechanized equipment within a designated wilderness area comprise the only adverse impacts to this activity.















F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: Specific comments referred to mining activity and access roads. These were reevaluated by field checks and are shown on the current maps where appropriate.
2. Study Phase: Thirty-four letters were received on WSA 142 and 18 on WSA 141, which was combined with WSA 142. Of the 52 letters exactly half favored and half opposed wilderness designation.

The most common concerns raised by opponents of a suitable recommendation for this WSA were mining potential and recreational opportunities. Recreationists felt that the area was excellent for motorized vehicle use for rockhounding for obsidian, scheelite, limestone and quartz. Trailriding, hunting and camping were other desired uses. Others felt that the potential wilderness quality was diminished by the flat, muddy, desolate scenic quality, a microwave site, active mines, nearby urban areas and the noise of military overflights. One letter stated that the economies of Ballarat and Indian Wells depended on motorized vehicle use in the vicinity.

Those favoring wilderness designation pointed out the high scenic value of areas such as the east side of the Panamint range, Goler Wash, and the old Crescent Mine. The adjacent administratively-proposed wilderness area in Death Valley National Monument was felt to reinforce the suitability of this WSA. The need for protection of wildlife and vegetation was discussed, as was the desire for primitive recreation and areas for ecological and geologic study. Some suggested deleting active mines from the wilderness area.

Three responses to the Public Input Workbook (3/15/79) were received. All favored designation of this WSA as wilderness. The area contains bighorn sheep and good bighorn habitat in the eastern part (Panamint Mountains). The National Park Service agreed that the area is compatible with administratively-endorsed wilderness in Death Valley National Monument.



3. Draft Plan Alternatives: A variety of public comments not specific to WSA 142 were received in response to the Draft Desert Plan Alternatives. For example, one indicated complete agreement with the Protection Alternative, another agreed with the Use Alternative, while a third sought more wilderness than in the Protection Alternative. Another expressed the need to protect the Panamint Valley burros.

The National Outdoor Coalition (NOC), a coalition of mining, rockhounding and off-highway vehicle groups, recommended that this area be designated nonsuitable for wilderness. A large number of club members sent in printed coupons supporting this position. Conservation groups supported wilderness designation for the entire WSA. Comments were largely concerned with motorized vehicles - either the need for access for recreation or mineral exploration and development or the need to protect the sensitive natural values of the area from vehicular damage. The Board of Supervisors of Inyo County requested a nonsuitable (Multiple Use Class "M") designation for this area because of mineral resources.

4. Proposed Plan: There were practically no specific comments on this particular WSA in response to the Proposed Plan. Motorized vehicle groups and conservation organizations maintained the same positions stated for the Draft Alternatives, as did the Inyo County Board of Supervisors. The Naval Weapons Center at China Lake requested that the western half of the WSA be designated nonsuitable as they need this route into the Mojave B Range.



# **Funeral Mountains**

*CDCA 143*







## FUNERAL MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-143)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 59,573 acres

The Funeral Mountains WSA is located in Inyo County in the north eastern portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The community of Death Valley Junction is three miles to the east. The WSA includes 55,100 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), 2,390 acres owned by the State of California and 787 acres of private land. There are 1,296 acres of split estate within the WSA (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The western boundary of the WSA is the administratively-endorsed wilderness within Death Valley National Monument (DVNM). The Nevada-California state line and an abandoned railroad grade forms the northern boundary. The eastern boundary deviates from the railroad grade and heads south to avoid historic mines and associated access roads. The Sidehill Mine itself is cherrystemmed. The eastern boundary continues south, generally following the 2200-foot contour interval. State Route 190 forms the southern boundary. Portions of the WSA are also within a future utility corridor (1990-2020) identified for the State of California in the Western Regional Corridor Study (1980).

The WSA includes the eastern extension of the Funeral Mountains which trend northwest to southeast and rise very abruptly from approximately 2,200 feet near Death Valley Junction to 6,703 feet at Pyramid Peak. The northern portion of the WSA includes the Amargosa River drainage and the broad alluvial fan (bajada) which lies between the drainage and the boundary of the National Monument. The vegetative composition of the area includes a creosote bush scrub plant assemblage of high to moderate density and diversity. Component species include creosote, burrobush, cheesebush, spiny hopsage and mormon tea.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced, and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

24,362	acres recommended for wilderness
33,392	BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness



Partial wilderness (approximately 42% suitable) is the recommendation for the Funeral Mountains WSA. The BLM recommends that 23,004 public acres be included in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). The other 32,096 acres in this WSA recommended nonsuitable are released for uses other than wilderness. In addition to the Federal acreage recommended for wilderness, BLM recommends that 1,209 acres of State land and 149 acres of private land be acquired through exchange or purchase and designated as wilderness. With acquisition of these inholdings, a total of 24,362 acres are recommended for wilderness. Appendix 1 lists all inholdings and provides additional information on their acquisition. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally-preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan and further explained in the California Wilderness Study Overview.

The suitable portion illustrates wilderness character that exemplifies the criteria established in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964. This area is characterized by abrupt, rugged mountains and an enclosed colorful valley. The opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation, as well as its naturalness, are outstanding to the point of far outweighing alternative uses of the suitable portion for other than wilderness. The adjacent administratively-endorsed wilderness in Death Valley National Monument will provide for continuity in management and law enforcement.

Exemplary landscapes include the rugged and colorful banding of dolomite and limestone rock along the southern extension of the Funeral Mountains, the picturesque Pyramid Peak which rises to nearly 7,000 feet, and the geologically-enclosed, colorful valley called Red Amphitheater. Man-made intrusions have been excluded, leaving pristine rugged canyons and craggy peaks. Due to the ruggedness and complexity of the canyons and peaks, outstanding opportunities for solitude are available. The terrain lends itself to unique opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation, including backpacking, mountain and rock climbing, day hiking and nature studies. Additional opportunities for extended desert backpacking experiences are afforded by the contiguous administratively-endorsed wilderness in the National Monument. Currently, however, the WSA receives very low recreational use. Because wilderness values are so significant, the suitability recommendation will preclude any further vehicular use of approximately 6.4 miles of primitive access routes of travel.

The significance of the area's wilderness values far exceed the mineral potential of the area. Areas of high mineral potential are excluded from the recommended suitable portion with the exception of less than one square mile that has high potential for sand and gravel resources. However, over nine square miles of high potential sand and gravel resources within the WSA are excluded from the recommended suitable portion. The suitable portion of the WSA does contain moderate potentials for bentonite (clay), zeolites, limestone, dolomite, silica and borates.



The entire WSA does not contain any unusual plants or any State or Federal listed threatened or endangered plant or animal species. However, primarily within the suitable portion there is habitat for the desert bighorn sheep, a BLM sensitive species. A bighorn sheep guzzler, built and maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game, is located within the central portion of the area recommended for wilderness designation.

Wilderness designation will not impact access to traditional Native American collection sites near Pyramid Peak. Current access to these sites is via vehicle, to the base of the mountains, and then on foot. Only the mountains themselves are recommended for wilderness designation.

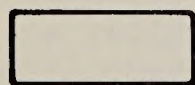
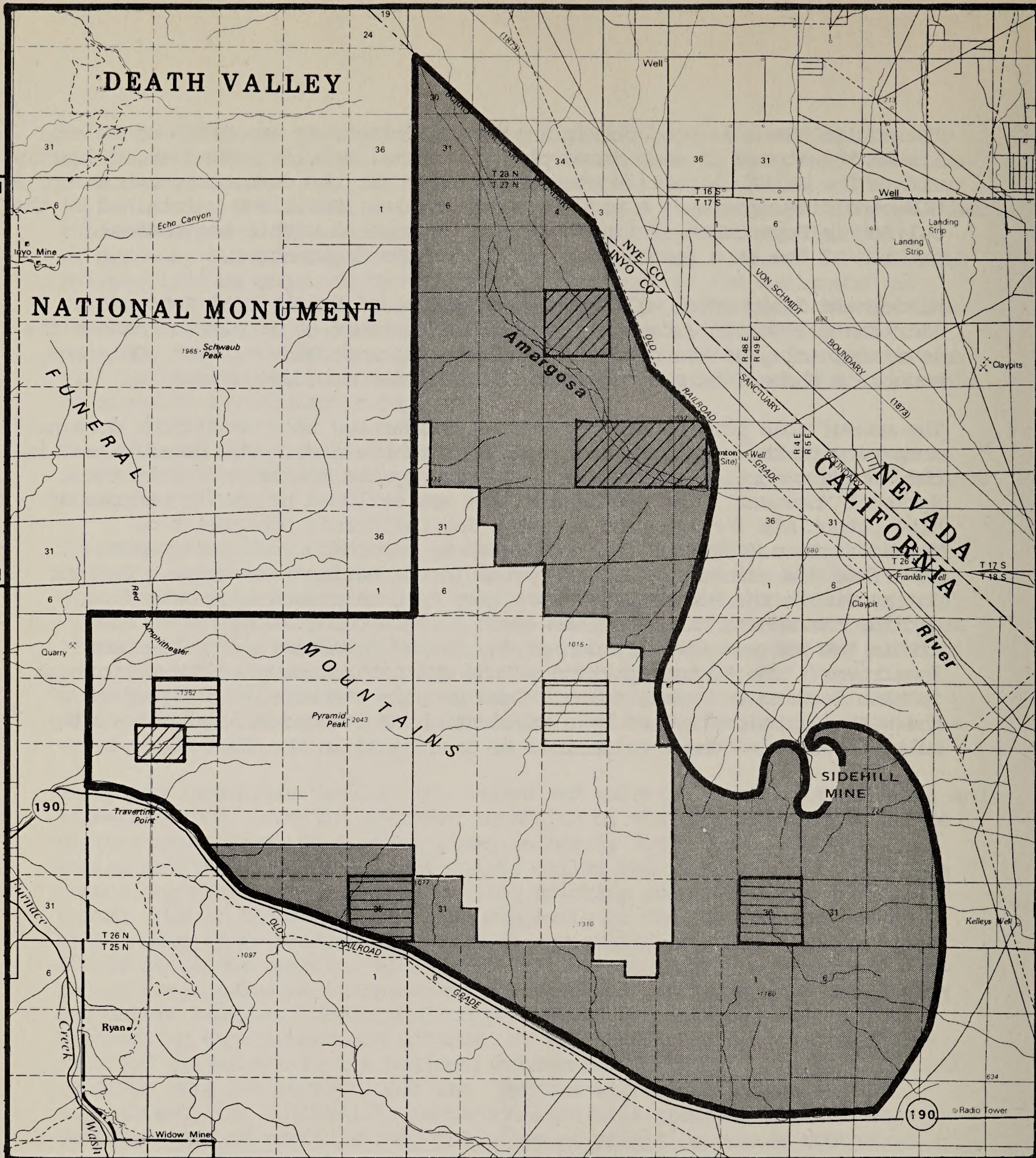
The nonsuitable portion of both partial-wilderness recommendations does not compare with the scenic splendor of the suitable area. The broad bajada in the northern portion of the WSA is dwarfed by the mountains within the National Monument. The southern bajada was excluded primarily because of high potentials for sand and gravel. The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has requested to use these vast reserves to resurface and maintain the road system in the National Monument. Current policy within the Monument requires them to obtain such aggregate from outside the Monument boundaries. Such a request for an aggregate site within the WSA was recently denied due to the potential for wilderness impairment. The eastern portion of the WSA not recommended for wilderness is also lacking in scenic value. Land uses in the nonsuitable portion of the WSA will be controlled by a combination of low and moderate intensity, multiple use management guidelines as prescribed in the CDCA Plan.



T28N  
T27N

T27N  
T26N

T26  
T25



RECOMMENDED FOR  
WILDERNESS



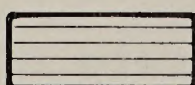
RECOMMENDED FOR  
NONWILDERNESS



LAND OUTSIDE WSA  
RECOMMENDED FOR  
WILDERNESS



SPLIT ESTATE



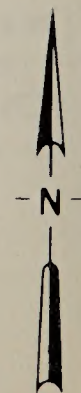
STATE



PRIVATE

**Funeral Mountains  
Proposal  
MAP-1**

0 1 2 3  
MILES



CDCA-143  
JUNE, 1988



TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	55,100
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	1,296
Inholdings		
State		2,390
Private		787
Total		<u>59,573</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	23,004
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA) <sup>1</sup>	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA) <sup>1</sup>	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>23,004</u>
Inholdings <sup>1</sup>		
State		1,209
Private		149
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	32,096
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	1,296
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>33,392</u>

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1 is a detailed description of inholdings and split estate tracts included within the study. For purposes of this report, split estate lands are defined only as those lands with Federal surface and non Federal subsurface (minerals). Lands that have Federal minerals but non Federal surface should be classified in this report by the owner of the surface estate.



3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

· A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The entire suitable portion is largely undisturbed by man and affected primarily by the forces of nature. The only exception is a desert bighorn sheep guzzler located in an isolated canyon. The guzzler is camouflaged and only visible within the immediate area.

For the most part, the nonsuitable portions are also void of man-made intrusions. The southern bajada does however, contain a borrow pit previously used by Caltrans as an aggregate site for highway maintenance and repair.

2. Solitude: The suitable portion of the Funeral Mountains WSA offers outstanding opportunities for visitors to experience solitude. Narrow, winding canyons and large, rugged peaks and ridges instill feelings of solitude and isolation.

The nonsuitable portion largely consists of bajadas. On these bajadas, opportunities for solitude are limited by lack of vegetative screening and uniform topography. In addition, adjacent mining scars and access roads are more readily visible from within the nonsuitable portion.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The entire WSA allows for freedom of unconfined movement and provides good opportunities for primitive recreation. The adjacent administratively-endorsed wilderness in Death Valley National Monument and the unconfined character of the landscape further enhance these opportunities.
4. Special Features: The suitable portion of the WSA contains a significant portion of the colorful Red Amphitheater valley. The balance of the amphitheater is within the administratively-endorsed wilderness in Death Valley National Monument.

Pyramid Peak is a traditional collection area for Native Americans.

The recommended suitable portion of the WSA contains desert bighorn sheep habitat. The herd that utilizes this area as a portion of its range is estimated to contain 60 individuals. The purpose of the guzzler installed by the California Department of Fish and Game is to expand the range of the herd by providing an additional water source.



The nonsuitable portion of the WSA is within the Chidago Valley Wild Horse and Burro Herd Management Area. There are less than 20 wild horses utilizing the management area. Burros are known only to be transient users, primarily residing within the National Monument. According to a management plan signed in 1984, no specific management actions are planned.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 56,396 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush ecosystem. The suitable portion of the Funeral Mountains WSA is considered to be an exquisite representation of desert wilderness opportunities and values. Significant features include the precipitous and vibrant dolomite and limestone cliffs along the southern extension of the Funeral Mountains, the complex maze of canyons, and the colorful and geologically unusual Red Amphitheater valley.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

<u>Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV</u>	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,212,809
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,599,005

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of two major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.



Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

<u>Population Centers</u> <u>California</u>	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of nine BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness area is John Muir Wilderness, administered by the Inyo National Forest, 80 miles west of the WSA.

C. Manageability

The recommended suitable portion of the Funeral Mountains WSA is manageable as wilderness with no identified complications. Areas of high mineral potential have been excluded and only 140 acres of the entire suitable portion is encumbered with mining claims. There are no current plans of operation for any mineral exploration or development and therefore the likelihood of any valid existing rights is considered small.

Existing recreational and vehicle use is virtually nonexistent. Maintaining the integrity of the boundaries will require minimal effort because of the adjacent administratively-endorsed wilderness in Death Valley National Monument. Once the area is officially designated wilderness, an administrative determination will be made to provide for maintenance of the bighorn sheep guzzler.

Acquisition and designation of the State and private inholdings is important for management of the area as a unit. This will assure: 1) continuity of management philosophy and 2) protection of the area's naturalness and important wilderness opportunities such as primitive and unconfined types of recreation and solitude.

The nonsuitable portion of the WSA would be difficult to manage as wilderness due to the vast reserves of mineral material which Caltrans needs to use to resurface roads within Death Valley National Monument. The entire southern bajada is rich in sand and gravel reserves; competitive interests will increase as reserves in urban southern California become increasingly inaccessible.



#### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The Funeral Mountains WSA (CDCA-143) is located in the BLM Pyramid Peak Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M data in the wilderness portion of the Desert plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) indicated in 1980 that the northeastern tip of the WSA contained the Sidehill bentonite deposit, a former producer from Tertiary-age sediments. These sediments were known to contain another bentonite deposit about two miles west of Sidehill, also within the WSA. Tertiary-age sediments throughout the area (mostly within the northern part of the WSA) were assessed as having "excellent" potential for bentonite. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) had, in 1978, classified the alluvial areas of the WSA as prospectively valuable for sodium, and oil and gas, and the alluvial areas in the northern and eastern part of the WSA as a Potential Geothermal Resource Area (PGRA).

The BLM GRA file classified the WSA as having low to unknown potential for the occurrence of metallic mineral resources. A small area next to the Sidehill Mine was classified as having high potential for the occurrence of bentonite (clay) where the deposit was known to occur. About two square miles in the northern part of the WSA were classified as having moderate potential for the occurrence of bentonite based on known occurrences of bentonitic deposits in Tertiary sediments. A four-mile strip along the northeastern side of the WSA was classified as having moderate potential for the occurrence of hectorite clay and mineral whiting (calcium carbonate) based on favorable geology (Quaternary-age alluvium) near an active mine for these minerals near Franklin Well. A small area in the southeast part of the WSA was classified as having moderate potential for tufa (a variety of calcium carbonate) based on a known deposit. The GRA file rated the potential for the occurrence of sodium as moderate. This classification is used where there are known occurrences of sodium nearby. Since the nearest known occurrences of sodium are at Alkali Flat (Subeconomic showings) six miles away, the potential for the occurrence of sodium is actually low within the WSA. The moderate potential rating for the occurrence of geothermal resources in the northern and eastern part of the WSA was based on the PGRA being favorable for plant siting. The BLM GRA file indicated the potential for the occurrence of oil and gas as moderate based on the prospectively valuable classification by USGS in 1978, based on inference that the overthrust belt extended into the area. The GRA classified an area surrounding an idle gravel pit in the southern part of the WSA as having moderate potential for occurrence of sand and gravel.

The moderate classification for oil and gas identified in the 1980 GRA was used where the area has not been classified by USGS. Since the alluvial areas were classified (prospectively valuable) and are outside of the overthrust belt, the potential for occurrence is considered low.



2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should be Considered in the Final Recommendation: USGS and the U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) conducted a mineral survey of the portion of the WSA recommended suitable for wilderness designation during the period 1981 to 1983. The results of the survey were published in Bulletin 1709-A in 1984. The USGS and BOM identified a moderate potential zone for the occurrence of large borate deposits in the southwestern part of the suitable portion of the WSA. This mineral occurrence was not identified in the 1980 GRA. Low potential was indicated for the presence of geothermal resources, a reduction from the 1980 GRA moderate potential.

New data was also provided in 1986 in the California Division of Mines Open File Report (OFR) 86-10 SAC, Mineral Land Classification of the Ash Meadows... Quadrangles, 1986, which indicates that the Sidehill mine is an active rather than past producer of bentonite (cherry-stemmed out of the WSA). The CDMG report shows a large moderate potential zone for the occurrence of bentonite (clay) and zeolites in the northern part of the WSA, taking in a larger area than what BLM had classified as moderate potential for the occurrence of clay in the 1980 GRA. The CDMG report also shows moderate potential zones for limestone, dolomite and silica in the central, southwestern and southeastern parts of the WSA. After 1980, the status of a BLM mineral material free-use permit for sand and gravel to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the WSA changed from inactive to active. Field visits to the area with Caltrans revealed that the potential for the occurrence of sand and gravel resources is high rather than moderate as identified in the 1980 GRA in both the alluvial fan and stream wash (upper Funeral Creek) deposits at the southern end of the WSA. Changes from the 1980 GRA occurrence classifications by USGS/BOM and the CDMG have been adopted by the BLM and are shown on Map 2.

Unpatented mining claims in the WSA are summarized in the following table taken from BLM mineral records dated December, 1987. These claims are located principally in the suitable and nonsuitable portions of the south and southeast portions of the WSA.

Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
MINING CLAIM						
Lode	3	15	18	60	300	360
Placer	2	2	4	80	80	160
Mill Site	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	5	17	22	140	380	520



E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Existing high quality wilderness values will be maintained in the approximately 42% of the WSA that is recommended suitable. Access to and development of any valid, existing mineral rights will, however, adversely impact wilderness values on a localized basis.

In the nonsuitable portion, naturalness, opportunities for solitude, and opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation will decline, especially on the southern bajada. Caltrans would like to develop the sand and gravel resources as soon as possible. In the other nonsuitable portions, exploration and development of locatable minerals and a small increase in OHV use will also cause a long-term decline in wilderness values.

2. Impact on Locatable Minerals: Moderate potentials for six different minerals cover virtually the entire suitable portion of the WSA. Exploration and development of these minerals will be virtually impossible after wilderness designation. However, mining claims encumber only 140 acres of the suitable portion. Development of any valid, existing rights will be allowed to continue based upon regulations and the guidelines outlined in the CDCA Plan.
3. Impact on Leasable Minerals: Opportunities for development of the known sand and gravel resources on the southern bajada in the nonsuitable portion will continue to be available. Caltrans is expected to develop these resources in the short-term for road resurfacing and maintenance of the road network in the adjacent DVNM.
4. Death Valley National Monument: Adjacent values in DVNM will be complimented by designation of the recommended suitable portion of the WSA as wilderness.
5. Impact on Future Utility Corridor Development: The WSA is within a future utility corridor (1990-2020) as identified in the Western Regional Corridor Study (1980) for the State of California. The corridor itself is located just east of the recommended-suitable area. A planned communications site is, however, within the suitable boundary. The site could be moved to other nearby mountain peaks. This corridor was not identified or designated during the development of the CDCA Plan. Depending upon the juxtaposition of the WSAs ultimately designated wilderness within the CDCA, there may or may not be constraints to future corridor development.
6. Impact on Desert Bighorn Sheep Habitat: Virtually all of the sheep habitat in the WSA is contained within the portion recommended for wilderness. The habitat will, therefore, receive permanent protection from activities that alter the natural environment. However, development of any valid, existing mineral rights will,



based upon the magnitude of disturbances, reduce the quality of the habitat. Opportunities for development and maintenance of additional water sources for sheep will be provided for, but may be constrained by vehicle use and equipment restrictions.

7. Impact on Native American Concerns: Wilderness designation of the suitable portion will not impact use of traditional collection sites. Currently, due to the precipitous terrain, access is on foot.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: One comment discussed areas that did not contain wilderness values, pointing out agricultural development, dwellings and other imprints of man. This portion of the area was not considered for further study. All other comments supported the findings regarding natural conditions and primitive recreation opportunities.
2. Study Phase: Of 14 comments received on this WSA, nine supported designating the area as wilderness. The area's scenic quality, bighorn sheep, and contiguity to Death Valley National Monument were qualities repeatedly listed as enhancing the area's wilderness potential. Two letters discussed the area's primitive recreational potential: climbing, hiking, photography and nature study.

Two boundary alternations were suggested: 1) consolidate this area with Death Valley National Monument, and 2) extend the eastern boundary to State Route 127.

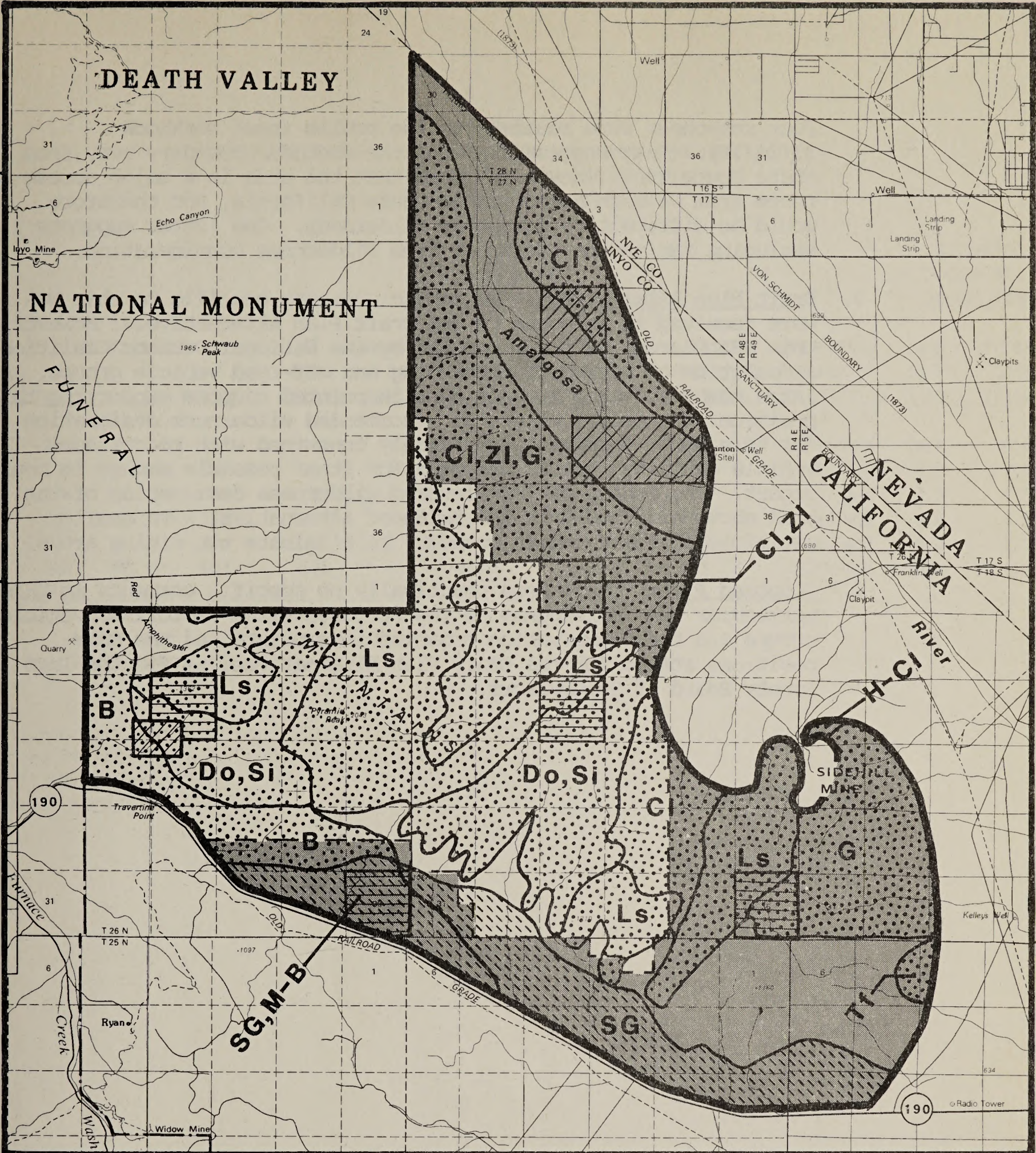
The letters opposing wilderness designation listed sights and sounds of highways, milling operations and mines. One letter was concerned about road access for mining.



T28N  
T27N

T27N  
T26N

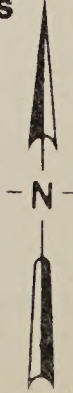
T26N  
T25N



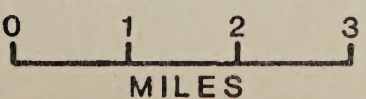
- Recommended for Wilderness
- Recommended for Non Wilderness
- Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness
- Split Estate
- State
- Private

- Explanation**
- High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
  - Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
  - M** Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area
  - H** High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area

- Commodity Symbols**
- B** Boron/borax
  - CI** Clay
  - Do** Dolomite
  - G** Geothermal
  - Ls** Limestone
  - Si** Silica
  - SG** Sand & Gravel
  - Tf** Tufa (decorative rock)
  - ZI** Zeolite



**Funeral Mountains  
Mineral Resource Potential**



**MAP-2  
CDCA-143**



Four responses were received to the public input workbook (3/15/79). They suggested moving the southern boundary away from State Route 190. They also noted that the area is a major access route from western Nevada to southern California, and therefore would be difficult to manage as wilderness. One letter suggests excluding fan and bajada areas from wilderness consideration.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: No public comments specific to this WSA were received in response to the Draft Plan Alternatives. However, this WSA was one of those opposed by the National Outdoor Coalition, a coalition of mining, rockhounding and off-road vehicle groups. A large number of club members sent in printed coupons supporting this position. Conservation groups recommended wilderness designation for this WSA. Comments were largely concerned with motorized vehicle activity, either the need for it or possible damage it could impart. The County of Inyo favored wilderness designation of the area shown as Class C in the Balanced Alternative, with small revisions in the northern boundary to eliminate two mining areas.
4. Proposed Plan: There were practically no specific comments in this particular WSA in response to the Proposed Plan. Motorized vehicle groups and the conservation organizations maintained the same positions stated for the Draft Plan Alternatives, as did the Inyo County Board of Supervisors.



APPENDIX 1  
ESTIMATED COSTS OF ACQUISITION OF NON-FEDERAL HOLDINGS WITHIN  
AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR DESIGNATION  
FUNERAL MOUNTAINS WSA (CDCA-143)

PARCEL No.	LEGAL DESCRIPTION				TOTAL ACREAGE	NUMBER OF OWNERS	TYPE OF OWNERSHIP BY ESTATE		PRESENTLY PROPOSED FOR ACQUISITION	PREFERRED METHOD OF ACQUISITION	ESTIMATED COST OF ACQUISITION	
	TWN	RNG	SEC	MERIDIAN			SURFACE ESTATE	SUBSURFACE ESTATE			LAND COSTS (\$1000)	PROCESSING COSTS (\$1000)
1	26N.	3E.	16	SBM	560	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
2	26N.	3E.	16	SBM	80	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	PURCHASE	8.0	2.5
3	26N.	3E.	17	SBM	40	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	PURCHASE	4.0	2.5
4	26N.	3E.	20	SBM	40	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	PURCHASE	4.0	2.5
5	26N.	3E.	21	SBM	80	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	PURCHASE	8.0	2.5
6	26N.	4E.	16	SBM	640	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0

These figures were derived from Bureau Land Records and provide for more detail than GIS estimates and therefore may differ from acreage summaries in Table 1.







# **Resting Spring Range**

*CDCA 145*







RESTING SPRING RANGE WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-145)

1. THE STUDY AREA ---

107,505 acres

The Resting Spring Range WSA is located in Inyo County within the northeastern portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The community of Death Valley Junction borders the northwestern edge of the WSA and the community of Shoshone is three miles south of the area. The WSA includes 100,960 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and 6,373 acres owned by the State of California and 172 acres of private land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA is bounded to the northeast by the California-Nevada stateline, to the north by a dry sand wash, and to the northwest by a dirt road. The western border is the Tonopah and Tidewater Railroad grade and State Route 127. The southern boundary meanders through the Resting Spring Range, avoiding mines, roads and other surface disturbances related to mining exploration and development. State Route 178 forms the eastern boundary except where it deviates to follow the old highway. The realignment of this highway, completed prior to 1978, is reflected on Map 1. However, this realignment was not reflected on the original topographic maps used in delineating the boundary during the WSA inventory process. There was never any intention for portions of the WSA to extend east across the paved highway.

The WSA includes much of the Amargosa River Valley, the Resting Spring Range and Eagle Mountain, a small mountain unit that rises steeply from the surrounding, flat terrain. Elevations range from 1,700 to 5,264 feet. The WSA includes approximately 50% mountains, 20% alluvial fans, 13% dissected fans, 10% playas, 5% highly dissected fans and 2% riverwashes. Eagle Mountain juts abruptly from the surrounding Amargosa River Valley, standing in sharp topographic contrast to the surrounding area, with colorful bands of strata as a dominating feature. The Amargosa Valley comprises an alluvial plain that slopes downward to a dry lake bed just north of Eagle Mountain. The valley is sparsely vegetated with creosote and low desert shrubs and bounded on the west by the Amargosa River. The Resting Spring Range varies in topography from smooth, low-rolling hills to extremely coarse, rugged rock formations with jagged peaks and deep canyons. In some locations, the rocks display a variety of colors ranging from subdued browns and tans to more intense pinks, reds, greens and black.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced, and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.



2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0	acres recommended for wilderness
100,960	BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for the Resting Spring Range WSA. This nonsuitable recommendation is the result of a 1982 Amendment to the CDCA Plan which changed the 59% partial-wilderness suitability recommendation for the WSA contained in the 1980 CDCA Plan. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts. Future activities in the area will be controlled by a combination of low and moderate intensity, management as prescribed in the CDCA Plan. The balanced alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative, as outlined in the CDCA Plan and further explained in the California Wilderness Study Overview.

The known and potential mineral and energy values within the Resting Spring Range WSA far exceed the value of the area as wilderness. Designation of the area as wilderness would not contribute any additional unique or distinct features to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Other WSAs in the California Desert that are recommended suitable offer a much more extensive and diverse representation of desert wilderness values.

The Resting Spring Range WSA has long been recognized for its mineral and energy resources. It was the Inyo County Board of Supervisors that requested, in a 1982 Amendment to the CDCA Plan, that the suitability recommendation of the WSA be changed to nonsuitable because of the mineral wealth of the WSA. Over 7,100 acres of the WSA are encumbered by 238 mining claims. There is currently very intense activity and exploration for borates in the WSA. Given the past history of the area, the likelihood for a major discovery is considered high.

Virtually the entire WSA has recognized mineral potential. Portions of the WSA have high potentials for the occurrence of sand and gravel, building stone, zeolites, lead, silver, zinc, gold and borates. Other portions have moderate potentials for zeolites, clays, lead, zinc, uranium, sodium, building stone, dolomite, silicates, gold and geothermal resources.

The wildlife and vegetative resources within the area are typical of the surrounding desert. The area contains no unusual plants or State or Federally listed threatened or endangered plant or animal species. However, the brackish water assemblage located in the northern portion of the WSA is designated as an Unusual Plant Assemblage by the California Desert Plan. The WSA contains transient desert bighorn sheep habitat and three raptor eyries.

Portions of the WSA are within the Chicago Valley Wild Horse and Burro Management Area. The WSA also contains areas of known cultural resource sensitivity and historic Native American collection sites.

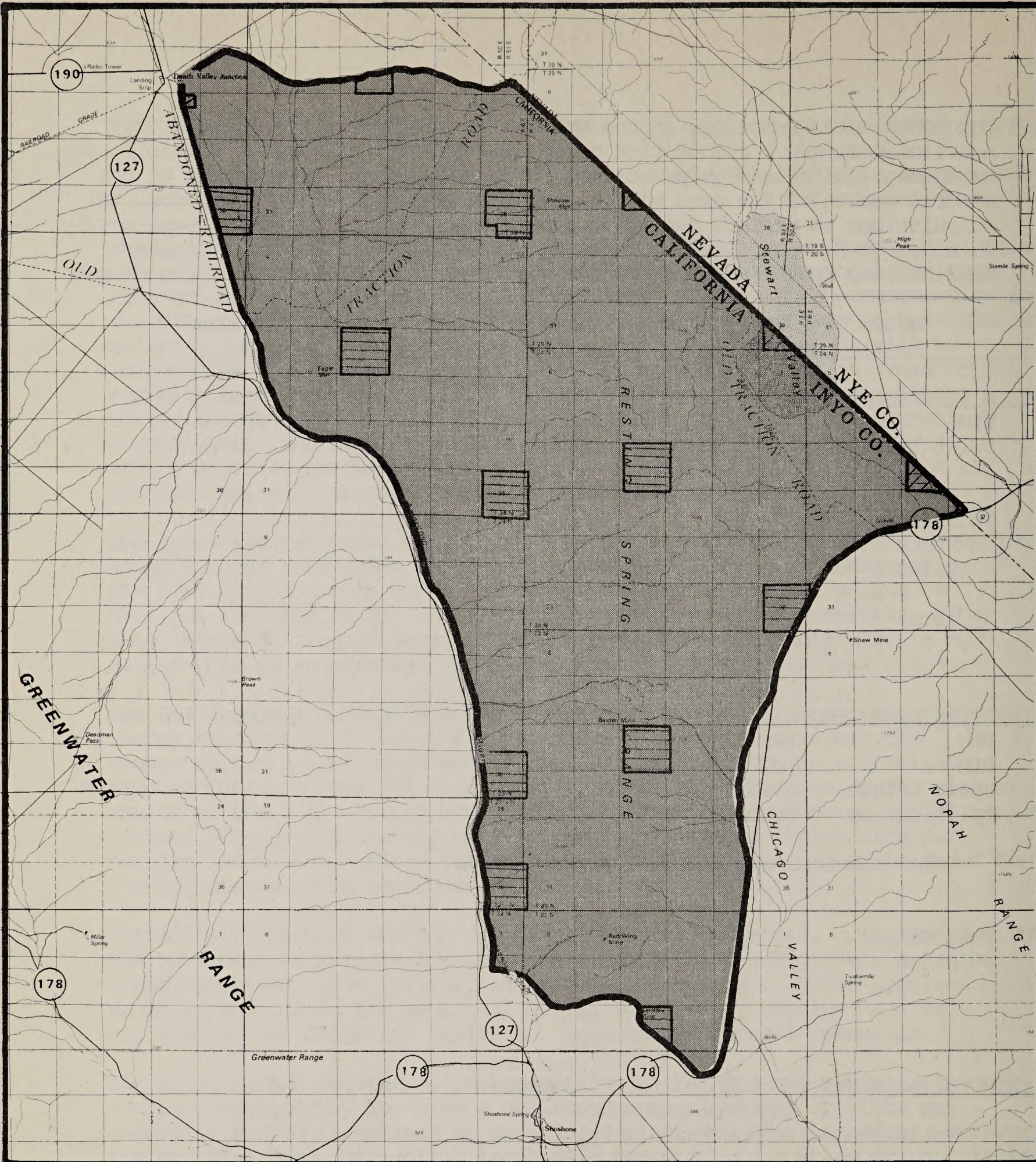


The non-mineral resources in the WSA can be managed and maintained under nonwilderness and a combination of low and moderate intensity, multiple use management guidelines as prescribed in the CDCA Plan. Development of the mineral wealth of the area will be possible, but with strict environmental stipulations to protect sensitive desert resources. There are approximately 29 miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	100,960
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		6,373
Private		172
Total		<u>107,505</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	100,960
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>100,960</u>





T24N  
T23N

T23N  
T22N

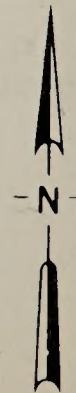
R5E R6E

R6E R7E

R7E R8E

- |  |      |   |
|--|------|---|
|  | NONE | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS                  |
|  |      | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |
|  |      | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |

- |  |              |
|--|--------------|
|  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | STATE        |
|  | PRIVATE      |



**Resting Spring Range  
Proposal  
MAP-1**

0 1 2 3  
MILES

CDCA-145  
JUNE, 1988



### 3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

#### A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The WSA is characterized by rugged mountains, intimate enclosed valleys, and vast, open bajadas that are essentially void of human intrusions. However, scattered throughout the area are surface disturbances which adversely affect the naturalness of the WSA. There are 29 miles of existing routes of travel within the area. The "Old Traction Road," originally built to haul borax from Death Valley, crisscrosses the area twice. Numerous mines and associated surface disturbances and access routes also impact naturalness of the area. The California Department of Transportation is dependent upon several sand and gravel sites along the Amargosa River drainage, just within the boundary of the WSA, for maintenance of the State Highway network. Approximately 12 miles of bladed roads were constructed in trespass in 1982 near Eagle Mountain. Although the process of reclaiming these roads has begun, the residual visual impacts will remain for years due to the extent of the original disturbance.
2. Solitude: Opportunities for solitude are excellent. The rugged mountains, intimate canyons, and vast bajadas allow visitors the feeling of being in an uncharted frontier. On the bajadas, a lack of vegetative screening and topographic diversity would reduce opportunities.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The rugged mountains and intimate canyons lend themselves to outstanding opportunities including backpacking, peak climbing, day hiking, and nature study. A published guidebook describes peak climbing opportunities on Stewart Peak and Eagle Mountain within the WSA. However, the 29 miles of existing routes of travel do have a limiting effect.
4. Special Features: The Brackish Water Unusual Plant Assemblage is located in the northern portion of the WSA. This assemblage associated with salt or brackish water marshes was designated to recognize its rarity in the California Desert. The Resting Spring Range contains transient desert bighorn sheep habitat. Otherwise the landforms, ecological diversity and geological features are not unique, they are typical of features common throughout the surrounding deserts and mountains.



B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 100,960 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush ecosystem. The Resting Spring Range WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This ecosystem is represented by many other suitable WSAs within the Mojave Desert portion of the California Desert.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

<u>Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV</u>	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,166,949
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,553,145

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of three major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

<u>Population Centers California</u>	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of ten BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation, two of which are located within the State of Nevada.



The closest designated wilderness area is Golden Trout Wilderness, administered by Inyo National Forest, 85 miles west of the WSA.

### C. Manageability

The Resting Spring Range WSA is manageable as wilderness. However, several significant issues have a high potential to complicate manageability of the area for wilderness.

The WSA and surrounding area have a long and intense history of energy and mineral exploration and development. The area contains well-known and recognized energy and mineral values. Full-scale development of any of the 238 mining claims has a high potential to impact wilderness values in significant portions of the WSA. Access requirements for such development would result in similar impacts.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The Resting Spring Range WSA is located in the BLM Resting Spring Range and Pyramid Peak Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Areas (GRA). BLM data in the wilderness section of the Desert Plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) in 1980 indicated that the WSA contained known occurrences of lead, silver, zinc, gold, borates, lithium and zeolites and that there was potential for sodium, oil and gas, and geothermal energy. An active sand and gravel pit (CalTrans material site) on the western edge of the WSA was known to be intermittently active since 1959.

There were two mineral deposits within the WSA with mining occurring just outside of the WSA. West of Shadow Mountain, at the north end of the Resting Spring Range, clinoptilolite was being removed from claims inside and outside the WSA. The deposit was estimated to contain over \$1 billion worth of zeolites in 1980. The other active deposit was the Gerstley borate mine. The mine site was barely excluded from the southern end of the WSA, although much of the deposit is included.

The Baxter Mine in the central Resting Spring Range produced lead, silver, zinc, and gold from 1915 to 1927. Smelter recovery is reported to have been 13.6 percent lead, 1.31 percent zinc, 10.3 ounces per ton of silver and 0.068 ounces per ton of gold. The Red Wing deposit, north of the Gerstley mine, is another replacement lead-zinc body in dolomite. Lead-zinc-silver deposits in Precambrian and Paleozoic dolomites in both the Resting Spring and Nopah Ranges indicated a favorable geologic environment for such mineralization. This environment is present in the mountainous part of this WSA.



High potential was assessed for sodium in all basinal parts of the WSA, according to classification by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). The USGS had identified a Potential Geothermal Resource Area (PGRA) in the southern part of the WSA.

The USGS classified the western and northern portions of the WSA as prospectively valuable for oil and gas. The EIS recognized potential for limestone and silica, based on known occurrences and environments in the Nopah Range. The Resting Spring Range had not been explored for these commodities. There was also potential for lithium. Economic studies by BLM indicated an estimated \$52 million worth of lithium in the brines of Alkali Flat at the north end of the WSA. Sepiolite, a clay mineral used in high-temperature drilling, was known to occur in three sections at the northern end of the WSA. There were over 130 unpatented mining claims on record with the BLM within this WSA in 1980.

The Resting Spring Range GRA report classified an area in the southern part of the WSA as having high potential for the occurrence of lead, silver, zinc and gold based on past production of these commodities from the Baxter mine.

The GRA report classified two small areas as having moderate potential for the occurrence of lead based on an occurrence at the Red Wing and High Chicago mines in the southern part of the WSA. About eight square miles near the center of WSA 145 were classified as having moderate potential for the occurrence of copper based on an occurrence in Precambrian marine rocks.

The GRA classified a small area at the southern tip of the WSA as having moderate potential for the occurrence of gold based on a low grade prospect known as Rainbow where a series of 15- to 25-foot-wide auriferous quartz veins reportedly occur in andesite. The GRA report indicated that a small area at the southern end of the WSA has high potential for the occurrence of borates based upon its proximity to the active Gerstley Mine and deposits owned by U.S. Borax and American Borate Co. (The undeveloped extension of the Gerstley II deposit, just south of the WSA contains 1,224,070 tons of borate reserves and resources). An area was identified in the GRA at the southern end of the WSA as having moderate potential for the occurrence of radioactive minerals based on coincident uranium and thorium anomalies in the alluvium and volcanic rocks. The GRA file shows two areas having moderate potential for the occurrence of sodium compounds which were classified by the USGS in 1978 as prospectively valuable. One of these is along the southeastern portion of the WSA; the other is a larger area along the western and northern portions of the WSA. The sodium-calcium borate, ulexite, has been produced from the Gerstley Mine near the southern end of the WSA; and a sodium borate was produced from a spring nine miles to the south.



The GRA file shows the southernmost tip of the WSA as having high potential for the occurrence of geothermal resources based on the 1978 USGS classification (potential geothermal resource area). The Resting Spring GRA file shows three areas having high potential for the occurrence of sand and gravel resources where CalTrans has material sites: One site is near the eastern tip of the WSA along Highway 178, another site is on the southeastern edge of the WSA; and on the western edge along Highway 127 (Evelyn site). The GRA file data also shows a moderate potential zone for the occurrence of sand and gravel resources along a large alluvial fan deposit in the western part of the WSA.

The Pyramid Peak GRA report, which covers the northwest part of the WSA, including Eagle Mountain and Alkali Flat, stated that little is known about the potential for the occurrence of metallic minerals in this area. The report and files indicate an area having high potential for the occurrence of zeolites at the northern end of the WSA based on a known deposit extending into the WSA. Anaconda Copper Company was actively mining the deposit less than one-half of a mile from the WSA in 1980. Anaconda estimated that the Ash Meadows deposit contained at least 20 million tons of the zeolite clinoptilolite. BLM estimates made on incomplete drill data in 1980, identified three million tons of clinoptilolite reserves and nine million tons of resources with a value of \$1.2 billion. However, the GRA report did not indicate what percentage of this is in the WSA. About two square miles in this same general area were identified as having moderate potential for the occurrence of sepiolite clay based on a known occurrence. In 1978, a USGS drillhole in Alkali Flat detected up to 810 parts per million (ppm) lithium in clay, indicating that hectorite clay beds may exist there. The Pyramid Peak GRA file classified the northern part of the WSA as having moderate potential for the occurrence of sodium based on the 1978 USGS classification (prospectively valuable). Although the GRA report did not identify any known occurrences of sodium, the potential for sodium minerals on Alkali Flat can be supported by remnants of evaporation ponds, a number of sodium prospecting permits issued in 1948-1960 and applications filed with the USGS in the 1970s.

The GRA classified this same general area as having moderate potential for the occurrence of oil and gas based on the 1978 USGS classification (prospectively valuable) and proximity to the overthrust belt. The GRA file shows the northern part of the WSA as having high potential for the occurrence of geothermal resources based on the 1978 USGS classification (PGRA), although there were no known geothermal resources within the Pyramid Peak GRA.

Although an eight-square mile area near the center of the WSA may contain undiscovered copper resources, the single copper occurrence identified in the GRA file would only support a "low potential" rating for this large area under the BLM classification.



The 1980 Desert Plan (Map 15) shows the northern part of the WSA classified as having a moderate potential for oil and gas outside of the overthrust belt. Under the BLM classification system, the potential for oil and gas there is actually "low."

The GRA classification for geothermal resources in the northern part of the WSA should be lowered from high to moderate based on a lack of hot springs and lack of exploration interest in the seven years since the GRA was written. In addition, this area has rugged terrain and is unfavorable for plant siting. Sand and gravel in the Amargosa drainage between Highway 127 and Eagle Mountain (northwest part of WSA) has high potential for the occurrence of aggregate based on past use by CalTrans. Recent research indicates that the right-of-way for Highway 127 is restricted to the area of disturbance. Thus, CalTrans is dependent on sand and gravel deposits in WSAs 145 and 147 as a source of aggregate for maintaining the highway and associated erosion control dikes. Rhyolite mined for decorative stone at the southern end of the WSA has high potential for occurrence based on past production since 1965 (and possibly earlier). Currently, mining claims are located on the deposit.

2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should be Considered in the Final Recommendation: In 1983 and 1984, the U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) conducted a mineral survey of the suitable portion of the WSA which was recommended suitable for wilderness designation. The results of the mineral survey were published in 1985 in open file report MLA 6-85. Although the BOM study found no active mines within the WSA, MLA 6-85 reported a marginally economic zeolite deposit, a large (estimated at six million tons) subeconomic copper deposit, and occurrences of gold, silver, copper, lead, zinc, borates, clays and silica. The report essentially substantiated the BLM GRA file data.

In 1987, AFG Industries, the Nation's second largest glass maker, built a major plant in Victorville, about 170 miles from silica deposits in this WSA. The present silica source for AFG is near the Nevada border, about the same driving distance as the WSA. The California Division of Mines and Geology (CDMG) indicated in their 1986 Open-file Report 86-10 SAC, Mineral Land Classification of the Ash Meadows, Big Dune, Eagle Mountain, ...Stewart Valley 15-minute Quadrangles..., that a large area covering over one-third of the WSA from (north to south) has hypothetical resources of dolomite and silica (quartzite) which may be of commercial value for silica brick manufacture and/or portland cement additive. The equivalent BLM classification would be "moderate potential" for the occurrence of these resources. A CDMG report shows a larger zone of zeolites extending to the south than identified in the 1980 GRA file. This would be equivalent to having moderate potential for occurrence under the BLM classification system. The CDMG report shows Alkali Flat as having hypothetical resources of sodium and lithium based on



past operations for the recovery of sodium minerals (1948-1960) and 810 parts per million lithium detected by a USGS drill hole. These commodities have moderate potential for occurrence under the BLM classification. The GRA file classified this area as having low potential for the occurrence of lithium resources based on a favorable geologic environment. The CDMG classified the lower slopes on the southwest side of Eagle Mountain (northwest part of the WSA) as having hypothetical resources of building stone based on two quarry areas. Each produced somewhat less than 10,000 cubic yards in sedimentary rocks. One area produced red shale; the second produced a grey-to-brown quartzite. The area has moderate potential for occurrence of building stone under the BLM classification system.

Since 1981, the west one-third of the WSA has been an exploration target for borates by three companies because of favorable geology (Furnace Creek Formation and the possibility of structural troughs). Borates have been mined less than one-half of a mile to the south (Gerstley Mine) and four miles to the west (Lila C). According to CDMG, this broad area "may contain undiscovered mineral resources." Under the BLM classification, the area which is obscured by alluvium has low potential for the occurrence of borates based on a lack of known occurrences.

Unpatented placer and lode mining claims are concentrated in the north, west, and south portions of the WSA. Unpatented mining claims in the WSA are summarized in the following table, taken from BLM records dated December, 1987.

Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
MINING CLAIM						
Lode	N/A	110	110	N/A	2,200	2,200
Placer	N/A	122	122	N/A	4,880	4,880
Mill Site	N/A	6	6	N/A	30	30
Total	N/A	238	238	N/A	7,110	7,110

#### E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Noise, surface disturbance and access requirements for mineral and energy exploration and development will negatively impact naturalness, solitude, and primitive and unconfined types of recreation. Virtually the entire WSA contains mineral values at the moderate and high potential levels. The likelihood for major discovery is considered high.
2. Impact on Minerals and Energy: Opportunities for exploration and development of minerals and energy will continue to be available subject to applicable laws, regulations and the low and moderate intensity management guidelines established in the CDCA Plan.



3. Impact on the Unusual Plant Assemblage and Wildlife Habitat: The habitat will continue to be maintained, and receive priority consideration over conflicting land uses, according to land use prescriptions contained in the CDCA Plan.
4. Impact on Maintenance of State Highways: Opportunities for full development and utilization of the vast sand and gravel reserves along the State Highways will continue to be available.
5. Impact on Cultural Resource Values and Native American Concerns: The majority of the areas of sensitivity, in addition to applicable laws and regulations, are afforded the additional protection of the low intensity guidelines in the CDCA Plan. Traditional access to Native American collection sites will continue to be available.
6. Impact on Management of Wild Horses and Burros: Opportunities will continue to be available for the use of mechanized equipment to control population numbers within the carrying capacity of the Chicago Valley Herd Management Area.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: Many comments refer to potential mineral areas, with some references to specific sites already being used for exploratory work. These were field-checked and are reflected on the map where appropriate. A large number of comments supported the findings.
2. Study Phase: Eighteen letters were received on WSA 145. Ten recommended leaving the land open for mineral exploration and development. Two major mining companies were concerned about maintaining access to claims containing zeolite minerals, which are important as ion-exchange agents in many industrial processes, including water purification. Other minerals which may be present include lead, zinc, silver and gold.





T24N  
T23N

T23N  
T22N

R5E R6E

R6E R7E

R7E R8E

<div> <p><b>NONE</b> Recommended for Wilderness</p> <p>Recommended for Non Wilderness</p> <p>Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness</p> <p>Split Estate</p> <p>State</p> <p>Private</p> </div>		<div> <p><b>Explanation</b></p> <p>High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals</p> <p>Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals</p> <p>M Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area</p> <p>H High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area</p> </div>		<div> <p><b>Commodity Symbols</b></p> <p>Ag Silver Au Gold</p> <p>B Boron/Borax</p> <p>BS Building stone</p> <p>Cl Clay</p> <p>Do Dolomite/Limestone</p> <p>G Geothermal</p> <p>Na Sodium Pb Lead</p> <p>SG Sand &amp; Gravel</p> <p>U Uranium</p> <p>ZI Zeolite</p> <p>Zn Zinc</p> </div>	
<div> <p><b>Resting Spring Range</b></p> <p><b>Mineral Resource Potential</b></p> </div>		<div> </div>		<div> <p><b>MAP-2</b></p> <p><b>CDCA-145</b></p> </div>	



Other opponents of wilderness consideration noted the presence of many primitive ways leading to private lands or to former or current mining operations. Views of traffic on Highways 127 and 178 and overflights of jet aircraft and accompanying sonic booms were said to detract from wilderness potential.

The writers of the remaining eight letters all felt that the area met the wilderness criteria. The letters mentioned the area's superior scenic quality, its unique flora and fauna (golden eagle, prairie falcon, and three rare plants), its geologic and archaeological features and its opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation.

One response was received to the Public Input Workbook. It suggested that final action should be delayed until the results of mineral surveys on this area were available.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: Few comments specific to this WSA were received in response to the Draft Plan Alternatives. Two mining companies repeated the same information and requests to leave the area open to mining (zeolites) that were referred to in the section on Inventory. In addition, this WSA was one of a group opposed by the National Outdoor Coalition, a coalition of mining, rockhounding and off-road vehicle groups. This coalition recommended that the area be designated Class M (medium use), as recommended in the No Action Alternative. A large number of club members sent in printed coupons supporting this position. Conservation organizations and their supporters wrote many letters recommending wilderness consideration for all WSAs within the CDCA. The County of Inyo's Board of Supervisors opposed wilderness for this area, on the basis that BLM did not consider the mineral resources.
4. Proposed Plan: Public comments were very similar to those for the Draft Plan Alternatives. Motorized vehicle organizations and conservation groups maintained the same positions, as did the mining companies. The Inyo County Board of Supervisors again opposed wilderness consideration for this WSA because of a perceived lack of consideration of mineral resources.
5. 1982 Plan Amendments: In the 1982 Amendment Process, the Board of Supervisors of the County of Inyo proposed changing the recommendation on portions of this WSA from suitable to unsuitable, due to the high mineral potential. These deletions would have rendered management of the remaining area as suitable to be impractical, so the area to be reclassified was changed to include the entire WSA. The 20 square miles near Baxter Mine would be changed to Class M, and the remainder of the unit would be Class L. (The portions of the WSA which had been recommended as non-suitable by the CDCA Plan in 1980 retained their original classification).



Two hundred and eighteen comments were received on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement on this proposal. Eight favored and 210 opposed the change in wilderness recommendation. Only seven comments were received on the Final EIS - one in favor and six opposed the amendment. Opponents noted that increased mining activities would threaten wildlife and plant species. These include the desert bighorn sheep, prairie falcons, golden eagles and three rare plants. They cited the archaeological values and outstanding wilderness qualities of the WSA. They also observed that mineral studies had not been completed on the area and that if the area is recommended as nonsuitable, the studies wouldn't be done. They recommended postponing consideration until mineral studies have been completed.

Proponents of the amendment stressed the need for mineral exploration and development in this high potential area.







# **Greenwater Range**

*CDCA 147*







## GREENWATER RANGE WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-147)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA ---

153,295 acres

The Greenwater Range WSA is located in Inyo County within the northeastern portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The community of Death Valley Junction is one and one-half miles to the north and the community of Shoshone is one and one-half miles to the south. The WSA includes 145,454 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), 7,808 acres owned by the State of California, and 33 acres of private lands (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA is bounded to the east by State Route 127 and to the south by State Route 178. Greenwater Valley Road and Death Valley National Monument form the western border. The northern boundary meanders across the Greenwater Range, avoiding existing surface disturbances from mining exploration and development and patented mining claims. The eastern portion of the northern border is a gravel access road to the Lila C borate mine). Portions of the WSA are within a future utility corridor (1990-2020) for the State of California as identified in the Western Regional Corridor Study (1980).

The Greenwater Range WSA is characterized by terrain ranging from smooth flat valleys and bajadas with a low elevation of 1,819 feet to jagged mountains with a high elevation of 5,148 feet. The area contains approximately 32% mountains, 25% alluvial fans, 20% dissected fans, 10% hills, 5% plateaus, 5% highly dissected fans, 2% badlands, and 1% riverwashes. Two major drainages divide the area into thirds. Through Greenwater Canyon, the waters have carved a narrow passage in the volcanic rock, leaving steep sides and a twisting course. At Deadman Pass, the erosion has produced a large, open expanse with gently sloping sides. Although the valleys are densely vegetated, the mountains and slopes tend to support only sparse growth. Creosote is the dominate plant in the area. Typical Mojave Desert species abound, including desert holly, sagebrush, prickly pear, cholla, and bunch and annual grasses. Virtually the entire Greenwater Canyon Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) is within the WSA. The ACEC comprises approximately three percent of the WSA.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced, and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0	acres recommended for wilderness
145,454	BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness



No wilderness is the recommendation for the Greenwater Range WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. Future activities in the area will be controlled by low intensity management as prescribed in the CDCA Plan. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally-preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan and further explained in the California Wilderness Study Overview.

The ability to explore and develop the area's mineral potential is of greater significance than the value of the area as wilderness. The area has only moderate scenic variety. Designation of the area as wilderness would not contribute any additional unique or distinct features to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Other WSAs in the California Desert that are recommended suitable offer a much more extensive and diverse representation of desert wilderness values.

The Greenwater Valley WSA and surrounding area has long been recognized for its known and potential mineral values. Over 10,150 acres of the WSA are encumbered by mining claims and over 2,550 acres are leased for oil and gas. There is currently very intense exploration for borate reserves in the WSA. Given the past history of the area, the likelihood for a major discovery is considered high. The WSA contains high potentials for borates and sand and gravel as well as moderate potentials for copper, pumicite, thorium, gold, silver, zeolites, barite, tufa, sand and gravel.

The entire area does not contain the high wilderness values characteristic of wilderness areas already within the National Wilderness Preservation System. The area also compares poorly in scenic splendor to other WSAs in the CDCA that are recommended suitable for wilderness designation. The naturalness of the area is diminished by the routes through Deadman Pass and Greenwater Canyon which are county-maintained roads, an extensive network of bladed seismic access routes, sand and gravel extraction sites and surface disturbances related to mining exploration. There are approximately 70.8 miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.

The potential for increases in vehicle-dependent recreation is considered good. Current recreation use is low. The primary recreation use that occurs, such as rockhounding, camping, and hunting, are dependent upon vehicle access to traditional use sites.

The wildlife and vegetative resources within the area are typical of the surrounding desert. The area contains no unusual plants or State or Federally listed threatened or endangered plant or animal species. The WSA contains two areas that contain transient desert bighorn sheep habitat.



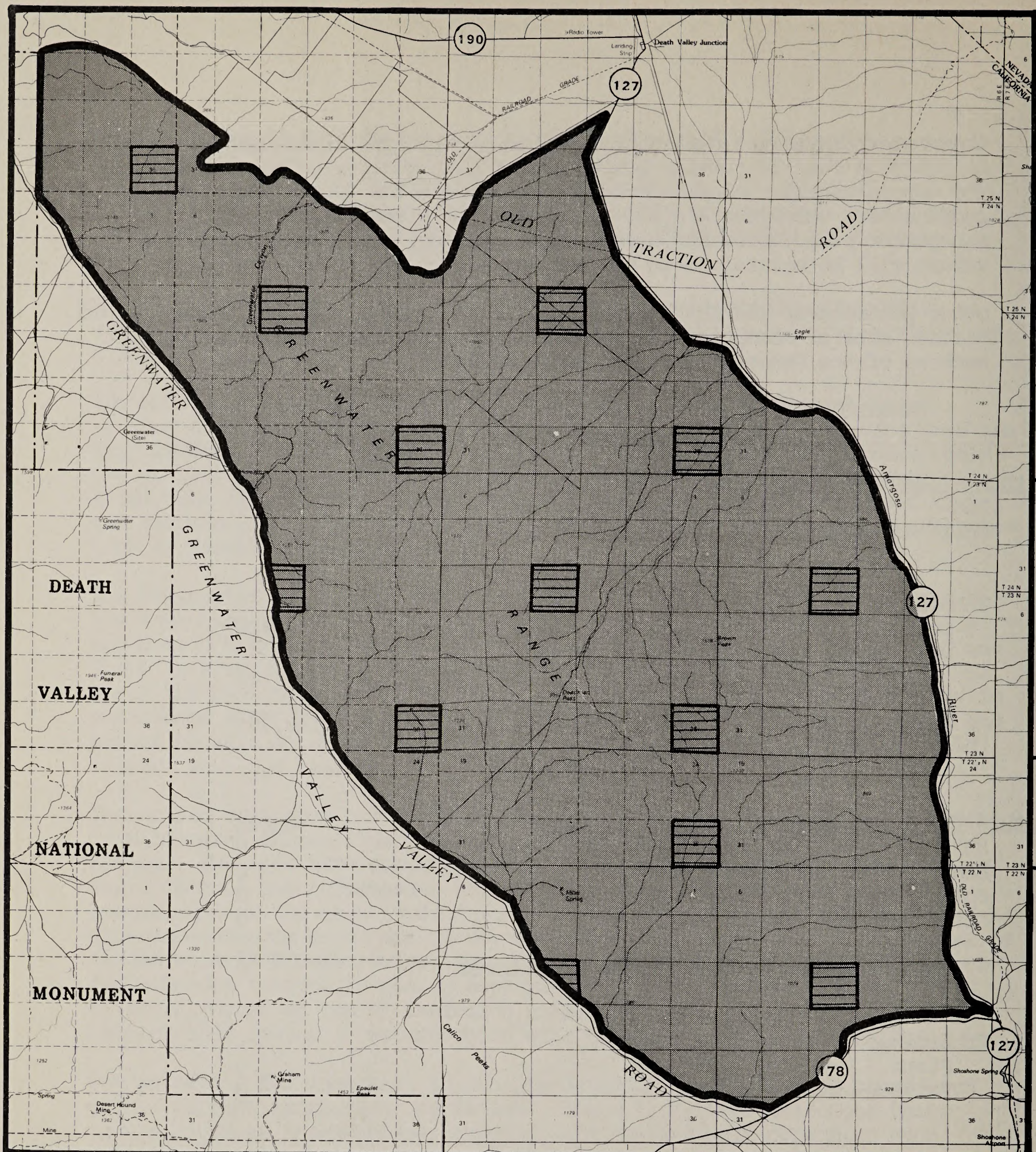
Greenwater Canyon was designated an Area of Critical Environmental Concern by the CDCA Plan to provide protection of high quality cultural resources. The canyon contains 42 prehistoric occupation sites consisting primarily of rockshelters which contain 300-350 petroglyph elements. The ACEC management plan implements a management strategy that assures existing values will be maintained in the long-term.

Other portions of the WSA contain numerous village sites, including the old village site of Shoshone, and several berry collection areas used by some members of the Panamint-Shoshone and Chemehuevi.

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area




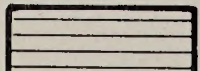

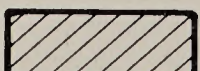
<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	145,454
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		7,808
Private		33
Total		<u>153,295</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	145,454
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>145,454</u>

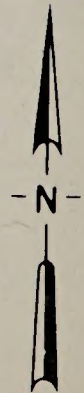




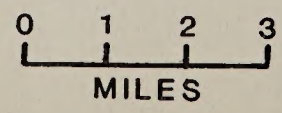
T25N  
T24N  
  
T23N  
  
T23N  
T22  
1/2N  
T22N

R3E R4E R4E R5E R5E R6E

- |   |      |   |  |              |
|---|------|---|--|--------------|
|  | NONE | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS                  |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  |      | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |  | STATE        |
|  |      | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | PRIVATE      |



**Greenwater Range  
Proposal  
MAP-1**



CDCA-147  
JUNE, 1988



### 3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

#### A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The area is not natural in appearance. The area is characterized by two major drainages dividing a long, jagged, mountain range, and flat valleys and bajadas which are mostly void of human intrusions. However, scattered somewhat uniformly throughout the entire area, are surface disturbances which adversely affect the naturalness of large blocks of the WSA. Some of these disturbances include an extensive network of seismic routes that were bladed in the mid-1970's, two county-maintained roads (missed during the inventory) that divide the area into thirds, unauthorized mining activities that are currently in the process of being rehabilitated, a sand and gravel extraction site and evidences of mining exploration from the early 1960's.
2. Solitude: Opportunities for solitude are excellent. The terrain and vegetative variety provide areas where a sense of isolation and seclusion are readily available. On the bajadas, lack of vegetative screening and topographic diversity would reduce opportunities.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The rugged mountains, canyons, and open bajadas lend themselves to opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation. A published guide book describes peak climbing opportunities at Brown Peak. However, the large number of surface disturbances and the existing routes of travel throughout the WSA do have a limiting effect.
4. Special Features: The northern and southern portion of the WSA contains transient desert bighorn sheep habitat. The area also contains the Greenwater ACEC, noted for its spectacular archaeological values.

#### B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 145,454 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush ecosystem. The Greenwater Range WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System.



Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	NWPS Areas		Other BLM Studies	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,122,455
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,508,651

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of three major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

Population Centers <u>California</u>	NWPS areas		Other BLM Studies	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of ten BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. Two of these are located within the State of Nevada. The closest designated wilderness area is Golden Trout Wilderness, administered by Inyo National Forest, 80 miles west of the WSA.



### C. Manageability

The Greenwater Range WSA is manageable as wilderness. However, several significant issues have a high potential to complicate manageability of the area for wilderness.

The WSA and surrounding areas have a long and intense history of mineral exploration and development. The area contains known mineral values. Full-scale development of any of the 488 mining claims has a high potential to impact wilderness values in significant portions of the entire WSA. Access requirements for such development would result in similar impacts. An oil and gas lease also affects 2,560 acres of the WSA.

Maintenance of designated county roads within a designed wilderness area would conflict directly with wilderness management.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The Greenwater Range WSA is located in the BLM Greenwater Range Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M data in the wilderness section of the Desert Plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) in 1980 indicated that mineral resource data for this WSA had not been fully analyzed, integrated, and interpreted, but that it had potential for copper-molybdenum porphyry deposits, uranium, pumice, sand and gravel, borates and lithium. Six unpatented mining claims were recorded with the BLM as of December 12, 1979.

The GRA report showed no recorded mineral production from the WSA in 1980. About one-third of the WSA could not be classified for industrial minerals because of insufficient information. GRA file data in 1980, showed three areas having moderate potential for the occurrence of copper, one in the northwest part, one in the north-central part, and one in the south-central part of the WSA, based on known occurrences. Two zones were identified in the northern part of the WSA as having high potential for the occurrence of borates. A small occurrence potential zone in the northwest corner is near a former borate producer known as the Widow Mine. An occurrence potential band along the northern edge of the WSA is adjacent to and near former producers including the Terry and Lila C borate mines. The Maria Mine is one of several undeveloped or inactive deposits in this vicinity and is just outside the WSA. The 1980 GRA file shows about 18 square miles in the western part of the WSA as having moderate potential for the occurrence of barite



based on known occurrences and geochemical anomalies. Barium values were greater than one standard deviation above the mean in the heavy mineral concentrates of nine stream sediment geochemical samples taken in the area.

The GRA report identified in 1980 a small area with moderate potential for the occurrence of tufa, a porous variety of calcium carbonate deposited by springs, near the Lila C Mine in the northern part of the WSA. Two areas were identified in the GRA file as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of thorium resources in the northern part of the WSA based on semiquantitative spectrographic analyses of geochemical samples from heavy mineral concentrates.

The GRA file classified the northern half of the WSA as having moderate potential for the occurrence of oil and gas based on the 1978 U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) classification as prospectively valuable. Under the BLM classification, the potential is "low" because the GRA is outside of the overthrust belt. Alluvial areas around the periphery of the WSA (excluding the central highlands) were classified in the 1980 GRA file as having moderate potential for the occurrence of sodium compounds based on the 1978 USGS classification as prospectively valuable. However, the GRA report states that, "leasable sodium and potassium resources are not known to exist within this GRA. Consequently, the potential for the occurrence of leasable sodium compounds in the WSA must be considered "low" under the BLM classification. The GRA file classified a small area (Evelyn site) on the eastern edge of the WSA as having high potential for the occurrence of sand and gravel resources based on past use of this material site by the California Department of Transportation.

The alluvium of the Amargosa River along the eastern edge of the WSA and next to Highway 127 was classified in the 1980 GRA file as having moderate potential for the occurrence of sand and gravel. Due to the cost of haulage, sand and gravel deposits near roads are more likely to be developed than those farther from roads. The GRA file classified an area in the northern half of the WSA as having low potential for the occurrence of pumicite based on a known deposit along Greenwater Canyon. The GRA report stated that the bed is 40 feet thick, consisting of about 99 percent pumice.

2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should be Considered in the Final Recommendation: No USGS or U.S. Bureau of Mines mineral survey was completed for this WSA because it is recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

All but the southern tip of the WSA was assessed by the California Division of Mines and Geology (CDMG) and the results released in Open-File Report 86-10 SAC Mineral Land Classification of the Ash Meadows, Big Dune, Eagle Mountain, Funeral Peak, Pahrump, Bryan...



Quadrangles, (1986). This study supports the 1980 BLM GRA classification for borates identified on the accompanying mineral potential map (Map 2). The CDMG report classified an area about half-way between the mouth of Greenwater Canyon and Ryan (north edge of WSA) as having hypothetical resources for zeolites. This would be equivalent to moderate potential for occurrence of those resources under the BLM classification system. OFR 86-10 SAC classified the west-central part of the WSA as possibly containing undiscovered resources of barite. This area was classified as having moderate potential for occurrence in the BLM GRA file. An exploration plan of operations was filed in 1982 for barite and silver within this area. An area of at least one square mile warrants a "moderate potential for occurrence" rating based on high assay values for silver by an anonymous party, trench exposures, and the fact that the barite could probably be recovered as a byproduct if the precious metals were mined. OFR 86-10 SAC classified approximately this same area where the barite occurrences are known in the western part of the WSA as having hypothetical resources of copper, silver and gold produced by hydrothermal vein mineralization. This would be equivalent to moderate potential for occurrence under the BLM classification system.

The GRA file had identified an area having moderate potential for the occurrence of copper at the southern end of this zone. Since 1980, research has revealed that the right-of-way for Highway 127, bordering the eastern edge of the WSA, does not extend beyond the area of disturbance. Thus, CalTrans is dependent upon sand and gravel deposits in WSAs 147 and 145 as a source of aggregate for the maintenance of Highway 127 and associated erosion control dikes.

The CDMG report also shows three areas with hypothetical resources of pumicite in the northern half of the WSA. One of these was identified in the BLM GRA. The area identified in the 1980 GRA as having a low potential for the occurrence of pumicite was based on the remoteness and poor access to this area. However, market conditions have been known to change quickly and interest in the California Desert for lightweight aggregates has been strong during the period from 1986 to 1987. Therefore, a "moderate" potential rating is given to this area under the BLM classification system.

Unpatented mining claims and leases in the WSA are summarized in the following table, taken from BLM records dated December, 1987.



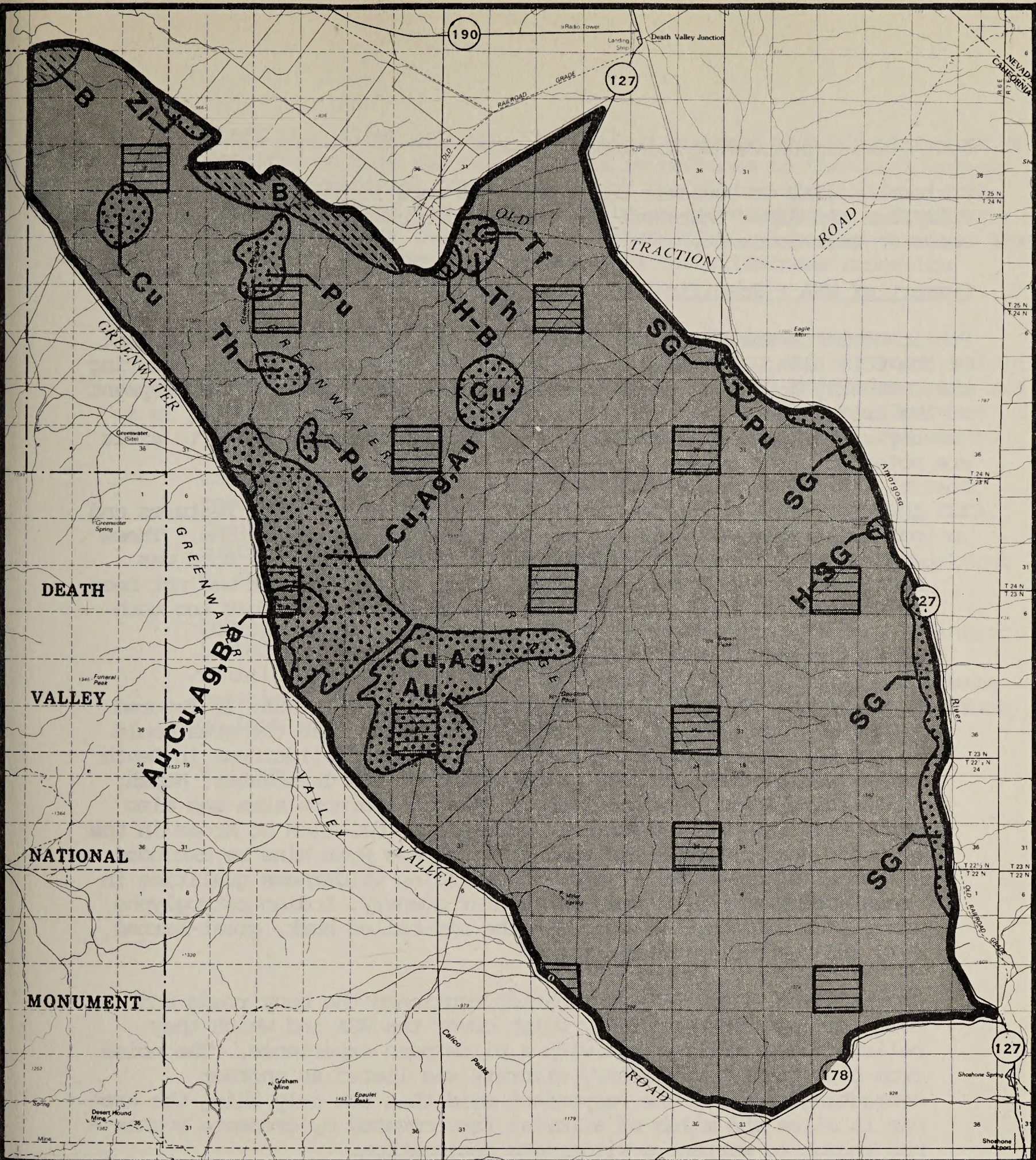
Table 4 - Mining Claims and Leases

TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
MINING CLAIM						
Lode	N/A	465	465	N/A	9,300	9,300
Placer	N/A	22	22	N/A	880	880
Mill Site	N/A	1	1	N/A	5	5
Total	N/A	488	488	N/A	10,185	10,185
Oil and Gas						
Leases	N/A	1	1	N/A	2,560	2,560

E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Noise, surface disturbance and access requirements for mineral and energy exploration and development will negatively impact naturalness, solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation. Increases in vehicle dependent recreation use will also adversely impact values.
2. Impact on Minerals and Energy Exploration and Development: Opportunities for exploration and development of minerals and energy will continue to be available subject to applicable laws, regulations and the low and moderate intensity management guidelines established in the CDCA Plan.
3. Impact on Desert Bighorn Sheep Habitat: The two areas of transient sheep habitat within the WSA will continue to receive priority consideration over conflicting land uses according to the management prescription contained in the CDCA Plan. However, some adverse site-specific impacts on sheep habitat are likely to occur from mineral and energy development activities.
4. Impact on Future Utility Corridor Development: The WSA is within a future utility corridor (1990-2020) for the State of California as identified in the Western Regional Corridor Study (1980). This corridor was not identified or designated in the CDCA Plan. However, non-designation will not preclude any future development of this corridor. Future corridor development will be guided by the CDCA Plan.
5. Impact on Cultural Resource Values and Native American Concerns: Cultural resource values will continue to be enhanced and protected by the Greenwater Canyon ACEC Management Plan. However, some adverse site-specific impacts to cultural resources are likely to occur as a result of mineral and energy Development in the WSA. Vehicular access to traditional Native American collection sites in other parts of the WSA will continue to be available.





T25N  
T24N  
T23N  
T23N  
T22 1/2N  
T22N

R3E | R4E | R4E | R5E | R5E | R6E

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">NONE</div> Recommended for Wilderness		<b>Explanation</b> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; width: 50px; height: 15px; background: repeating-linear-gradient(45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, black 2px, black 4px);"></div> High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; width: 50px; height: 15px; background: radial-gradient(circle, black 1px, transparent 1px); background-size: 4px 4px;"></div> Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 15px; background: repeating-linear-gradient(-45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, black 2px, black 4px);"></div> Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 15px; background: repeating-linear-gradient(-45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, black 2px, black 4px);"></div> High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area	<b>Commodity Symbols</b> <b>Ag</b> Silver <b>Au</b> Gold <b>B</b> Boron <b>Ba</b> Barium <b>Cu</b> Copper <b>Pu</b> Pumice <b>SG</b> Sand & Gravel <b>Tf</b> Tufa <b>Th</b> Thorium <b>ZI</b> Zeolite
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; width: 50px; height: 15px; background: repeating-linear-gradient(90deg, transparent, transparent 2px, black 2px, black 4px);"></div> Recommended for Non Wilderness <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; width: 50px; height: 15px; background: repeating-linear-gradient(0deg, transparent, transparent 2px, black 2px, black 4px);"></div> Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; width: 50px; height: 15px; background: repeating-linear-gradient(180deg, transparent, transparent 2px, black 2px, black 4px);"></div> Split Estate <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; width: 50px; height: 15px; background: repeating-linear-gradient(270deg, transparent, transparent 2px, black 2px, black 4px);"></div> State <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; width: 50px; height: 15px; background: repeating-linear-gradient(315deg, transparent, transparent 2px, black 2px, black 4px);"></div> Private			

**Greenwater Range**  
**Mineral Resource Potential**

0
1
2
3

MILES

- N -

**MAP-2**  
**CDCA-147**



F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: Several comments referred to man-made features and permanent scars from active and abandoned mining operations. These areas were deleted where appropriate. The Deadman Pass Road was mentioned several times, but field study showed that it had not been maintained for many years. Other comments indicated that too much land in the northern portion had been deleted and that rehabilitation should be considered.
2. Study Phase: Of the 27 responses received on this WSA, 17 favored wilderness designation. Two writers suggested that the area could be a natural entrance, or a buffer, to adjacent wilderness in Death Valley National Monument. Consolidation of the Greenwater, Nopah, and Resting Springs Ranges into one vast wilderness area was also suggested. Several respondents opposed the deletion of areas in the northern portion and urged that only the New Ryan Mine be excluded and other mines rehabilitated. Outstanding wilderness qualities in Greenwater Canyon included spectacular scenery, Indian petroglyphs and pictographs, and wildlife -- the red-tailed hawk, great-horned owl, and the desert bighorn.

Opponents of wilderness designation mentioned the many roads and evidences of mining activity which cover the WSA and which they believed were incompatible with a wilderness experience. The noise from overflights of military aircraft was listed as another detracting factor. One respondent said that the only thing the area has is miles and miles of alluvial fans covered by creosote bushes - not enough to warrant a wilderness designation.

Two letters were received in response to the Public Input Workbook (3/15/79). The National Park Service stated that WSA 147, along with WSA 148, was a compatible extension of unmodified lands meeting wilderness criteria within Death Valley National Monument. The second letter requested that the eastern boundary be moved three or four miles away from State Route 127.



3. Draft Plan Alternatives: The following range of public comments specific to this WSA was received in response to the Draft Desert Plan Alternatives. One stated that the entire study area and the northern half of the polygon should be recommended as suitable for wilderness under the Protection Alternative. A second view was that the entire WSA should be recommended for wilderness under the Balanced Alternative.

This WSA was one of those opposed by the National Outdoor Coalition, a coalition of mining, rockhounding and off-road vehicle groups. A large number of club members sent in printed coupons and letters supporting this position. The County of Inyo's Board of Supervisors also opposed wilderness because of mineral resources.

Conservation organizations and their members wrote many letters recommending wilderness designation for all WSAs within the CDCA. The Wilderness Society specifically mentioned WSA 147 as being suitable for wilderness, as did the State of California Department of Resources.

4. Proposed Plan: Comments on this WSA brought out the same points listed for earlier stages of the planning process. Motorized vehicle organizations and conservation groups maintained the same positions stated for the Draft Plan Alternatives, as did the County of Inyo Board of Supervisors.

No comments were received from local governments.







# **Greenwater Valley**

*CDCA 148*







GREENWATER VALLEY WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-148)

1. THE STUDY AREA ---

61,519 acres

The Greenwater Valley WSA is located in Inyo County in the northeastern portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The community of Shoshone is ten miles to the east. The WSA includes 58,500 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), 2,589 acres owned by the State of California and 430 acres of private land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The western boundary of this triangular WSA is administratively-endorsed wilderness in Death Valley National Monument (DVMN). State Highway 178 forms the southern border and the northeastern boundary is a dirt road through Greenwater Valley. Portions of the WSA are also within a future California utility corridor planned for 1990-2020 in the Western Regional Corridor Study (1980).

The area is characterized by the Calico Peaks mountains and a rugged eastern extension of the Black Mountains. These calico-colored mountains are dominated by volcanic, metamorphic and granitic rocks. The remainder of the WSA is dominated by the western slope of Greenwater Valley that flanks the precipitous Black Mountains. Elevations vary from 2100 feet at the eastern tip of the WSA to just over 5000 feet along the western border near Funeral Peak. Greenwater Valley is a vast, relatively undisturbed alluvial valley. The WSA contains 50% mountains, 30% alluvial fans, 10% dissected fans, 5% highly dissected fans, 3% pediments, and 2% hills. The vegetation is characteristically sparse and consists primarily of creosote bush scrub, desert holly scrub, and shadscale scrub.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced, and no action, and a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS. A 1982 amendment to the CDCA Plan formulated a second partial suitability recommendation in which approximately 40% of the WSA was recommended suitable for wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

24,158	acres recommended for wilderness
35,689	BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

Partial wilderness (40% suitable) is the recommendation for the Greenwater Valley WSA. The BLM recommends that 22,811 Federal acres be included in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). The other 35,689 Federal acres in this WSA recommended nonsuitable are released for uses other than wilderness. In addition to the Federal acreage recommended for wilderness, BLM recommends that 1,347 acres of State land be acquired through exchange or purchase and designated as wilderness. With acquisition of these



inholdings, a total of 24,158 acres are recommended for wilderness. Appendix 1 lists all inholdings and provides additional information on their acquisition. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The balanced alternative is the environmentally-preferable alternative, as outlined in the CDCA Plan.

The recommended suitable portion possesses an outstanding wilderness character that exemplifies the quality of criteria stated in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964. The area is natural in appearance. Permanent improvements and human intrusions have been either excluded from the recommended suitable area or are so insignificant as to not warrant attention. Opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation are outstanding, and include backpacking, day hiking, peak climbing and nature studying. The opportunities for peak climbing and backpacking are confined only to the individual's endurance and outdoor skills. Due to the area's remoteness and rugged terrain, opportunities for seclusion from the "rest of the world" and opportunities for individuals to escape human influences are outstanding.

Wilderness values in the suitable portion are outstanding to the point of far outweighing alternative uses for other than wilderness. The adjacent administratively-endorsed wilderness in Death Valley National Monument (DVNM) will provide for continuity in management and law enforcement. Because wilderness values are so significant, the suitability recommendation will preclude any further vehicular use of approximately 21.32 miles of primitive access routes of travel.

Wilderness designation of the recommended suitable portion of the WSA will pose only one identified manageability issue. Acquisition of the State land along the perimeter will be essential to ensure protection of important wilderness values. This issue is not considered significant, because upon designation, the BLM anticipates a formal request by the State of California to exchange this land.

Within the recommended suitable portion 1) the boundaries are well defined; 2) there is currently little to no vehicle-dependent recreational use; and 3) the U.S Geological Survey (USGS) and U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral reports indicated that there are no identified mineral values of moderate or high potential.

The entire WSA does not contain any unusual plants or any State or Federal listed threatened or endangered plant or animal species. The middle and southern portions of the WSA contains habitat for the desert bighorn sheep, a BLM sensitive species. There are no permanent surface streams, creeks or wells in the WSA. However, Montgomery Spring which is located on the eastern side of Salsberry Peak within the suitable portion, is an important water source for the sheep. The WSA contains no significant cultural resource values or Native American concerns.



The nonsuitable portion of the WSA does not compare with the scenic splendor of the suitable area. The extreme northern portion of the WSA was never recommended suitable because of mineral potential and impacts associated with an extensive patented mining claim, scars of adjacent mineral exploration, and the historic site of Greenwater. The central portion of the WSA was changed from recommended suitable to nonsuitable in a 1982 plan amendment to the CDCA Plan. Inyo County Board of Supervisors requested this change because of potentials for locatable minerals and the need to allow access on existing county roads.

Resource values in the administratively-endorsed wilderness in DVNM will not be negatively impacted if the nonsuitable portion of the WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The values in the Monument are of sufficient caliber and size to stand on their own merit. There will be minimal long term changes to the natural environment in the majority of the nonsuitable portion of the WSA because of an overall lack of identified mineral potentials, and the low intensity land use prescription in the CDCA Plan for this area. During development of the CDCA Plan, DVNM officials had requested that access roads leading into the Monument, through the central portion of the WSA, be left open and available for vehicle use. However, ironically, Monument officials opposed the 1982 plan amendment which changed the recommended suitable portion and, therefore, made these roads available for use.

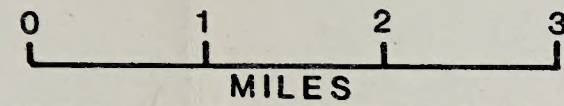




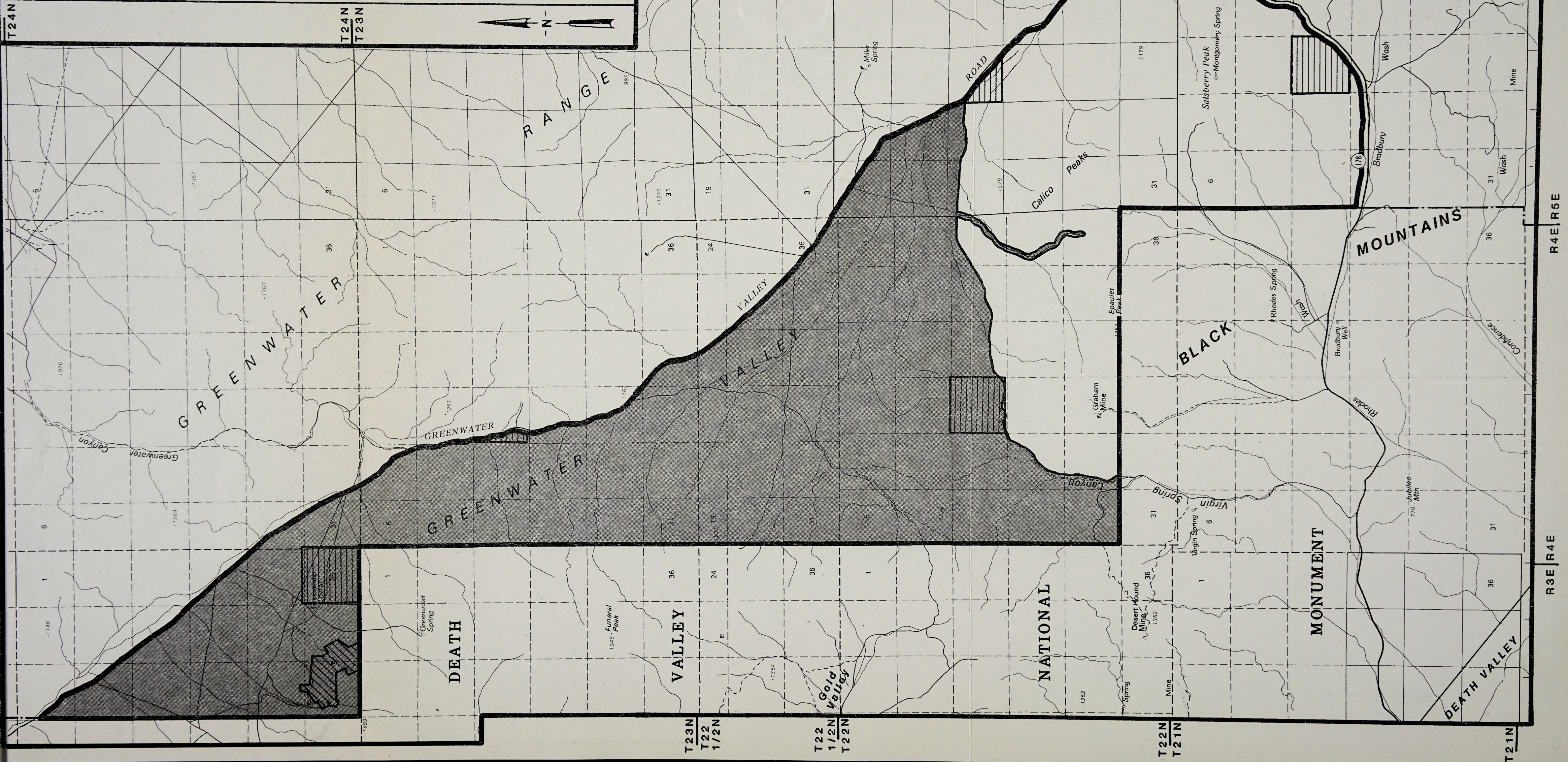
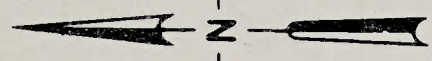


- RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS
- RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS
- LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS
- SPLIT ESTATE
- STATE
- PRIVATE

Greenwater Valley  
Proposal  
MAP-1



CDCA-148  
JUNE, 1988



R5E R6E

R4E R5E

R3E R4E







TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	58,500
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		2,589
Private		430
Total		<u>61,519</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	22,811
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>22,811</u>
Inholdings <sup>1</sup>		
State		1,347
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	35,689
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>35,689</u>

---

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1 is a detailed description of inholdings and split estate tracts included within the study. For purposes of this report, split estate lands are defined only as those lands with Federal surface and non Federal subsurface (minerals). Lands that have Federal minerals but non Federal surface should be classified in this report by the owner of the surface estate.



3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The suitable portion of the Greenwater Valley WSA is characterized by rugged mountains that are relatively void of human intrusions such as Epaulet Peak within the Black Mountains. Salsberry Peak is also intrusion-free and dominates the adjacent Calico Peaks Mountains. A cherrystemmed road in the north-central portion of the suitable area, which provides access to the interior of the area, degrades naturalness to a small degree.

The nonsuitable portion of the WSA is generally a large bajada that slopes east from the Black Mountains in DVM. The northern portion is heavily impacted from mineral exploration, development, and access routes associated with a large patented mining claim and the historic site of Greenwater. The central portion of the WSA is also recommended nonsuitable and contains several through access routes. In 1982, the Inyo County Board of Supervisors indicated that there was a need for access on these county roads.

2. Solitude: The Calico Peaks area exhibits a complex system of canyons and rugged peaks which offer outstanding opportunities for solitude. Feelings of isolation can also be found in the extensive drainage networks surrounding Epaulet and Salsberry Peaks. Opportunities for solitude are further enhanced by the adjacent administratively-endorsed wilderness in DVM.

The nonsuitable portion largely consists of a broad sloping bajada. On the bajada, opportunities for solitude are limited by lack of vegetative screening and uniform topography. The existing access roads, especially in the northern nonsuitable portion, are more readily visible at the higher elevations.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The terrain in the suitable portion lends itself to unique opportunities including backpacking, mountain climbing on Salsberry and Epaulet Peaks, day hiking and nature studying. The cherrystemmed road has somewhat of a limiting affect.

However, opportunities are further enhanced due to management of the adjacent administratively-endorsed wilderness in DVM.



The nonsuitable portion of the WSA contains many access roads that compartmentalize the area and tend to restrict opportunities for unconfined recreation.

4. Special Features: The eastern portion of the Black Mountains, which comprises approximately thirty percent of the WSA, contains a herd of the BLM sensitive desert bighorn sheep. Although the major portion of this mountain range is located within adjacent Death Valley National Monument, desert bighorn do utilize portions of the WSA located east of Funeral Peak on a permanent basis. This area is recommended nonsuitable. The recommended suitable portion of the WSA is utilized both on a seasonal and transient basis by this herd. Montgomery Spring near Salsberry Peak is an important water source within the suitable portion. The California Department of Fish and Game has estimated the herd size to be approximately 110 individuals.

#### B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystemsystem: This WSA contains 58,500 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush ecosystem. Although this ecosystem is already represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System, Greenwater Valley is a particularly distinct representation of this ecosystem.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,209,409
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,595,605

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of three major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.



Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

<u>Population Centers</u>	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of eight BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness area is Golden Trout Wilderness, administered by the Inyo National Forest, 85 miles west of the WSA.

#### C. Manageability

The recommended suitable portion of the Greenwater Valley WSA is manageable as wilderness. Only one issue needs to be resolved. The area contains several inholdings owned by the State of California. Acquisition of these inholdings is important strategically to the management of the area as a whole. However, based upon informal contact with the State Lands Commission, BLM will receive a request to exchange the inholdings as soon as the area is officially designated wilderness.

The boundaries are well defined, there are no identified mineral values of moderate to high potentials, and the adjacent administratively-endorsed wilderness in DVNM will provide for continuity in management and law enforcement.

A cherrystemmed Inyo County access route penetrates the northern portion of the recommended suitable boundary. Allowing motorized use of this route after wilderness designation will be a valuable asset to management of the remainder of the area as wilderness. It will allow opportunities for all segments of the population to gain access to the interior of the wilderness without degrading the area's wilderness integrity and it will allow law enforcement patrols access to ensure wilderness integrity and compliance with wilderness management policy and regulations.

Management of the nonsuitable portion of the WSA as wilderness would be difficult and complicated. This portion is not roadless. This portion of the WSA contains several County designated roads (missed during the inventory) and mining access routes that compartmentalize the area. These routes of travel negatively impact naturalness and opportunities



for primitive and unconfined types of recreation. The extreme northern portion of the nonsuitable area contains a large patented mining claim and surface disturbances associated with mining exploration and development. Due to the arid desert environment and the extent of the disturbances, natural rehabilitation will take many years.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

#### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The Greenwater Valley WSA (CDCA-148) is located in the BLM Greenwater Range Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M data in the wilderness portion of the Desert Plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) indicated in 1980 that resource data for this WSA had not been fully analyzed, integrated and interpreted. The EIS did indicate, however, that the WSA had potential for copper, uranium, sodium, and oil and gas. One mining claim was recorded with the BLM in the WSA as of December, 1979.

The 1980 GRA file indicated moderate potential for the occurrence of copper and barite resources in the northern part of the WSA where copper was mined in 1906 at the Greenwater site (20 tons of concentrate yielding 20% copper were recorded as being shipped). The GRA files classified the alluvium (valley fill) in the northern and northeastern part of the WSA as having moderate potential for the occurrence of sodium compounds. This was based on the 1978 U.S. Geological Survey classification as prospectively valuable (PV) for sodium coupled with known occurrences of saline minerals. The northern part of the WSA was classified by BLM in 1980 as having moderate potential for the occurrence of oil and gas based on the 1978 U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) prospectively valuable classification. The GRA files assessed the WSA as having insufficient data to classify for Uranium occurrence potential.

The 1980 BLM classification (GRA files) as "moderate" for the occurrence of sodium is unsupported by data in the GRA report. The Terradata Expert Panel felt that salines were "present or likely to be present," but they may have been considering the locatable borates known to occur in the Death Valley region. The GRA report states, "leasable sodium and potassium resources are not known to exist within this GRA." Based on the lack of known occurrences of sodium compounds, the potential for the occurrence of leasable sodium minerals in the WSA must be considered low under the BLM classification system.

2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should be Considered in the Final Recommendation: A mineral survey of the suitable portion of the WSA was conducted by USGS and BOM during the period from 1983



to 1985. The mineral potential for the portion of the WSA recommended suitable for wilderness designation was assessed by USGS and BOM in Bulletin 1709-B. The study reported two past producers in the southern part of WSA: 1) the Salsberry prospect which produced an unknown quantity of gold, silver, lead, and zinc (period of operation not reported); and 2) the Graham Jem Mine which produced less than one ton of high-grade ore containing gold valued at \$25,000 per ton in 1908. The study also reported several areas with low potential for the occurrence of metallic minerals (gold, silver, copper, lead, zinc and copper). The report concluded that the recommended suitable portion has low potential for the occurrence of borates and oil and natural gas resources. Since the area is well outside of the overthrust belt, the BLM classification for the WSA should be considered as a low potential for the occurrence of oil and gas resources under the BLM classification system.

Additional information on the WSA is furnished in California Division of Mines Open-File Report 86-10 SAC (1986), Mineral Land Classification of the...Funeral Peak...Quadrangles.... This report classifies an area near the Greenwater site (northern part of the WSA) as having moderate potential for the occurrence of barite and copper resources, respectively which supports the 1980 BLM GRA classification.

A plan of operations was filed in 1982 in the adjacent Greenwater Range WSA for silver and barite exploration east of the boundary of the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA. Based on high assay values by an anonymous party, and trench exposures in adjacent Greenwater Range WSA, the area surrounding this prospect, which extends into the WSA on the east boundary, is considered as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of silver and barite resources under the BLM classification system. The potential area may extend further westward beneath the alluvium in the WSA.

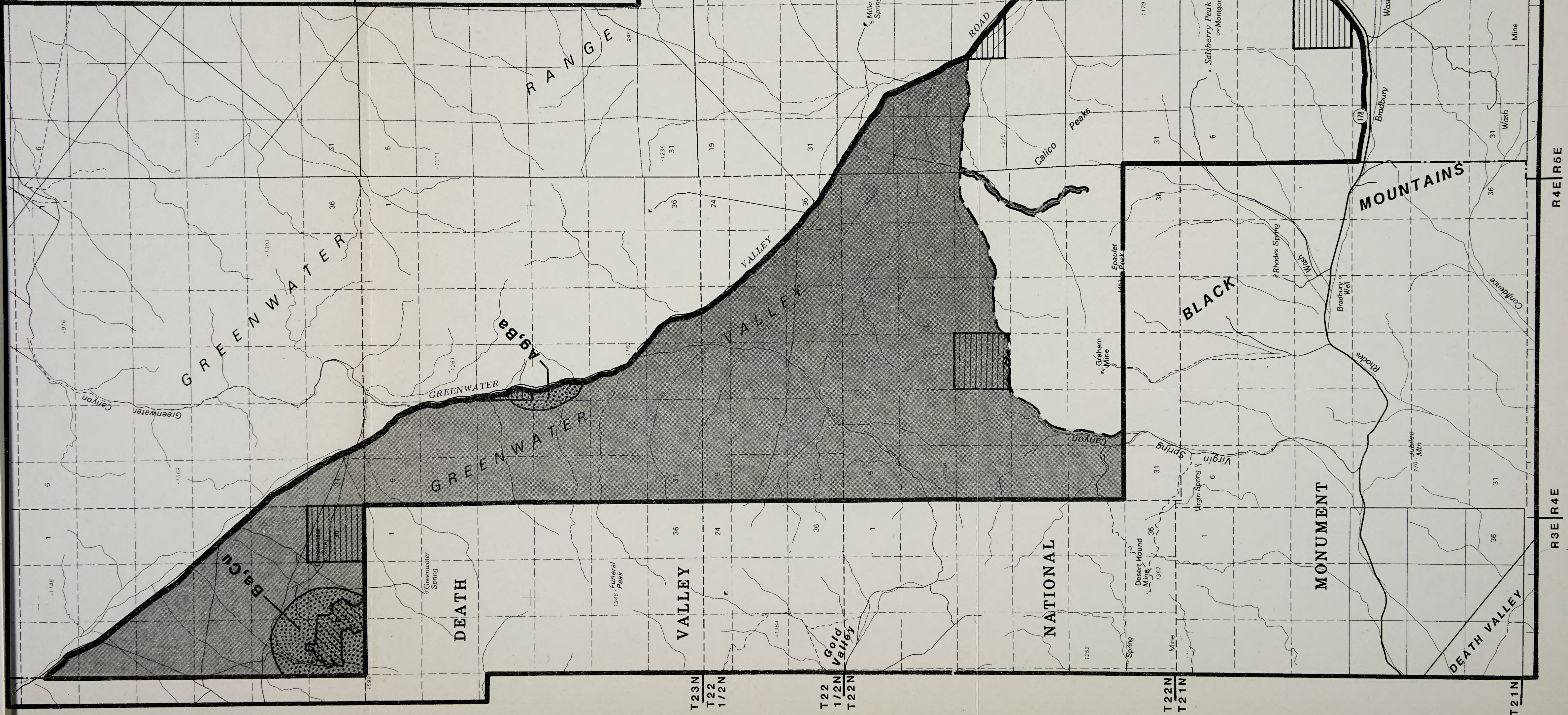
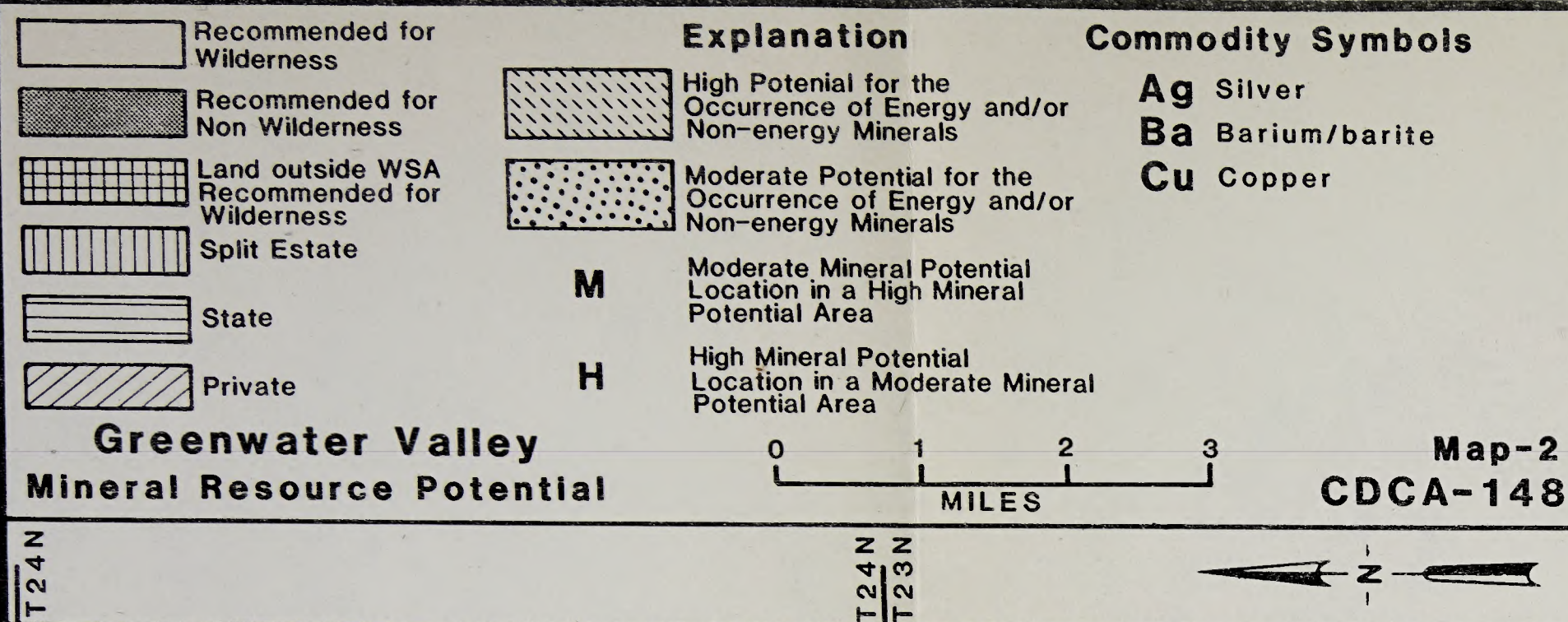
As of December, 1987, there were no unpatented mining claims in the WSA on record with the BLM.

#### E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Existing high quality wilderness values will be maintained on the 40% of the WSA that is recommended suitable. Currently there are no mining claims in this portion, so the likelihood for any valid, existing mineral rights is very small.

In the portion of the WSA not recommended as suitable, naturalness and opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation are not expected to decline appreciably. Only a small portion of the nonsuitable area has identified mineral values and the CDCA Plan stipulated that this area be managed under low intensity guidelines.











2. Impact on Locatable Minerals: The suitable portion has no identified mineral values at the moderate or high potential levels. Opportunities for exploration and development of locatable minerals in the nonsuitable portion will continue to be available subject to applicable laws, regulations and the low intensity management guidelines established in the CDCA Plan.
3. Death Valley National Monument: The suitable portion of the WSA will compliment existing management of the adjacent administratively-endorsed wilderness in DVNM. Releasing the nonsuitable portion of the WSA to uses other than wilderness will not adversely impact resources or the management of the adjacent administratively-endorsed wilderness as values within the monument are of significant quality to stand on their own merit.
4. Impact on Future Utility Corridor Development: The recommended-suitable portion of the WSA is within a planned utility corridor (1990-2020) as identified in the Western Regional Corridor Study (1980) for the State of California. This corridor was not identified or designated in the CDCA Plan. Depending upon the juxtaposition of the WSAs ultimately designated wilderness within the CDCA, there may or may not be constraints to future corridor development.
5. Impact on Desert Bighorn Sheep Habitat: All of the sheep habitat within the WSA will receive priority consideration over conflicting land uses according to the management prescription contained in the CDCA Plan for the area. Within the recommended-suitable portion, the potential for adverse impacts will be virtually nonexistent.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: Comments noted the presence of old mining scars and activity as well as several Jeep trails. An on-the-ground visit led to the conclusion that these impacts did not have a significant influence on the natural values of the area.



2. Study Phase: Eighteen letters were received concerning this WSA. Eleven favored wilderness designation. Reasons given were: (1) high wilderness potential due to contiguity with administratively-endorsed wilderness in Death Valley National Monument, (2) need for protection for bighorn sheep and other wildlife, and (3) general high quality of visual resources, ecology, geology and educational opportunities. Four of these respondents wanted some vehicle access, specifically the corridor to Gold Valley and the road to the historical mining town of Greenwater. One letter urged rehabilitation of the historical Greenwater mine site.

The letters opposing wilderness designation described sights and sounds such as mines, roads and lack of vegetation that they felt decreased the area's wilderness potential. Mining concerns discussed the need for access for exploration and development. Gold and copper were specific minerals mentioned.

Two letters were received in response to the Public Input Workbook for Wilderness Study Phase (3/15/79). The National Park Service recommended that the road into WSA 148 be left open as a wilderness corridor to provide access to Gold Valley.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: The National Outdoor Coalition (NOC), a coalition of mining, rockhounding and off-highway vehicle groups, recommended that this area be designated unsuitable for wilderness, with the dunes portion open to vehicles. A large number of club members sent in printed coupons supporting the NOC position. Conservation groups supported wilderness designation for the entire WSA. Comments were largely concerned with motorized vehicles - either the need for access for recreation or mineral exploration and development (including oil, gas, and geothermal), or the need to protect the sensitive natural values of the area from vehicular damage. The Board of Supervisors of Inyo County requested a nonsuitable (Multiple Use Class "M") designation for this area because of mineral resources.
4. Proposed Plan: There were almost no specific comments on this particular WSA in response to the Proposed Plan. Motorized vehicle groups and conservation organizations maintained the same positions stated for the Draft Plan Alternatives, as did the Inyo County Board of Supervisors.
5. 1982 Plan Amendments: In 1982, the Inyo County Board of Supervisors proposed a change in designation for the northern two-thirds (35,180 acres) of this WSA from Multiple Use Class "C" (suitable for wilderness) to Class "L" (limited Use). Reasons given were: (1) potential for locatable minerals and (2) the need for access on existing County roads. The amendment was approved.



Two hundred twenty comments were received on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement on this proposal; seven in favor and 213 opposed, including a petition of 27 signatures. Many of those against the amendment urged that consideration of this proposal be postponed until the USGS had completed mineral studies. Others pointed out that mineral potential was low, according to BLM data, and was therefore an insufficient reason for deleting the thirteenth highest-rated WSA in the California Desert.

Governmental agencies opposed to the amendment were:

National Park Service - Death Valley National Monument  
State of California Department of Resources

Organizations opposing the amendment included: None

Respondents favored the amendment citing no particular reasons.



APPENDIX 1  
ESTIMATED COSTS OF ACQUISITION OF NON-FEDERAL HOLDINGS WITHIN  
AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR DESIGNATION  
GREENWATER VALLEY WSA (CDCA-148)

PARCEL No.	LEGAL DESCRIPTION				NUMBER OF OWNERS	TYPE OF OWNERSHIP BY ESTATE		PRESENTLY PROPOSED FOR ACQUISITION	PREFERRED METHOD OF ACQUISITION	ESTIMATED COST OF ACQUISITION	
	TWNSHP	RNG	SEC	MERIDIAN		SURFACE ESTATE	SUBSURFACE ESTATE			LAND COSTS (\$1000)	PROCESSING COSTS (\$1000)
1	21N.	5E.	16	SBM	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
2	22N.	5E.	16	SBM	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
3	22N.	5E.	36	SBM	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0

These figures were derived from Bureau Land Records and provide for more detail than GIS estimates and therefore may differ from acreage summaries in Table 1.



# Ibex Hills

*CDCA 149*







## IBEX HILLS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-149)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA --- 40,597 acres

The Ibex Hills WSA is located in Inyo County within the northeastern portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The community of Shoshone is three miles to the east. The WSA includes 39,111 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), 1,465 acres owned by the State of California, and 21 acres of private land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern boundary of the WSA is State Route 178. Death Valley National Monument (DVNM) forms the western and southern boundary. The eastern boundary follows the ridgeline of the Ibex Hills north to Ibex Peak, turns east and crosses Greenwater Valley and then turns north again through the Dublin Hills. The boundary then turns west to join State Route 178. Portions of the WSA are within a future utility corridor (1990-2020) identified for the State of California in the Western Regional Corridor Study (1980).

The WSA includes portions of the Ibex Hills, Dublin Hills, and Black Mountains which have a general north-south orientation. A segment of Greenwater Valley, which is two to four miles wide and six to eight miles long, separates the Dublin Hills from the Ibex Hills. The Black Mountains and the Ibex Hills are very rugged mountain ranges; elevations in the WSA ascend from 888 feet to 4,752 feet at Ibex Peak within six miles. Through the horizontal rock layers of these mountain ranges, the colors of brown, bright red, yellow and black produce a distinctive scenic affect. The vegetative composition within the WSA includes the typical creosote bush scrub assemblage that exhibits some variability based on elevation.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0	acres recommended for wilderness
39,111	BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for the Ibex Hills WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. Under this recommendation, future activities in the area will be controlled by a combination of intensive and moderate levels of management as prescribed in the CDCA Plan. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.



The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan.

The high potential mineral and energy resources of the WSA are of greater value than the significance of the area as wilderness. The large number of existing routes of travel that impact naturalness in the northern portion of the WSA also influenced the nonsuitable recommendation. Designation of the area as wilderness would not contribute any additional unique or distinct features to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Other WSAs in the California Desert that are recommended suitable offer a much more extensive and diverse representation of desert wilderness values. There are approximately 35.5 miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.

The "heart" of the WSA has a long history of mineral production and contains a patented mining property. Previous mines have produced marketable quantities of lead, zinc, silver, copper and gold. Portions of the WSA have high potentials for the occurrence of lead, talc, copper, zinc, gold and silver, as well as geothermal resources. Other portions have moderate potentials for pumice, clay, zeolites, and perlite. Seven hundred and sixty acres of the WSA are encumbered with mining claims. These claims are concentrated in the areas of high mineral potentials. Given the history of the area, the likelihood for a major discovery and/or valid, existing mineral rights is considered to be extremely high.

One of the inholdings owned by the State of California in the southern portion of the WSA (640 acres) contains a past producing mine as well has high potentials for lead, talc, copper, zinc, gold, and silver. Full mineral development of this land would adversely impact wilderness values in the southern portion of the WSA.

The wilderness values are compromised by over 35 miles of existing routes of travel within the boundaries of the WSA. These routes are predominately in the valley portions of the area and include a designated "county-maintained" road. However, there is a route through Sheephead Pass and several routes in the northwestern and southern portion of the WSA that provide access to historic mines and high mineral potential areas.

No significant resources of DVNM would be impacted by the nonwilderness recommendation. Adjacent portions of the National Monument contain administratively endorsed wilderness. While designation of this WSA as wilderness would compliment the existing management of the Monument, the wilderness values within the Monument are sufficient to stand on their own merit without this WSA.



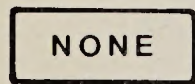
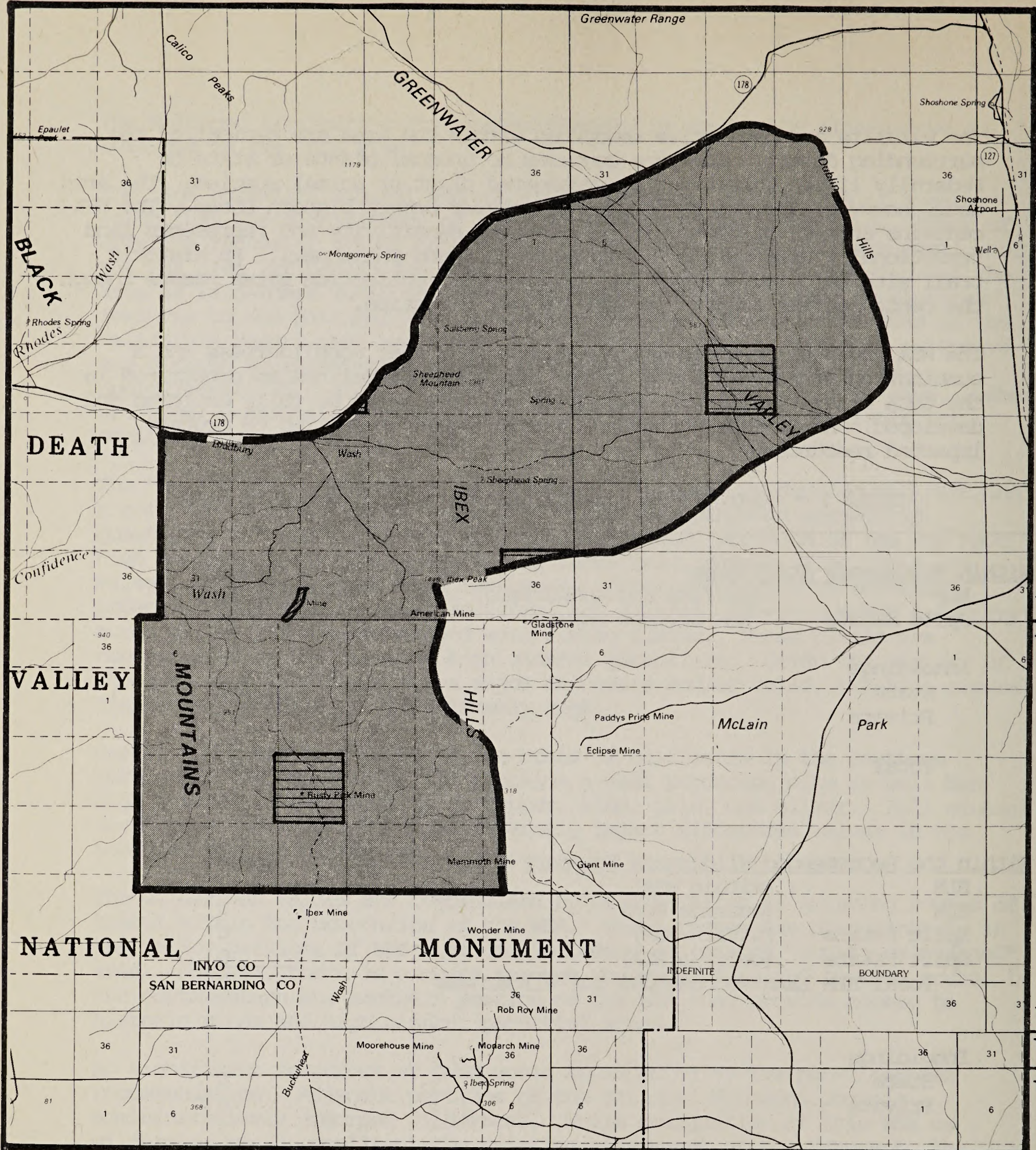
The wildlife and vegetative resources within the area are typical of the surrounding desert. The area contains no unusual plants or State or Federally listed threatened or endangered plant or animal species. The area does, however, support transient habitat for desert bighorn sheep. The WSA contains an area of high cultural resource sensitivity and represents land traditionally used by the Panamint Shoshone and Chemehuevi. An historic trail with talc, sumac, and Datura meteloidas collection sites passes through the center of the area in an east to west direction.

The WSA would be best managed and maintained under nonwilderness and a combination of intense and moderate management guidelines as prescribed in the CDCA Plan. The mineral wealth of the area could be fully explored and developed. Reasonable mitigating measure would be applied to protect impacted resources.

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	39,111
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		1,465
Private		21
Total		<u>40,597</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	<u>0</u>
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	39,111
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>39,111</u>





RECOMMENDED FOR  
WILDERNESS



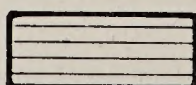
RECOMMENDED FOR  
NONWILDERNESS



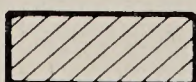
LAND OUTSIDE WSA  
RECOMMENDED FOR  
WILDERNESS



SPLIT ESTATE

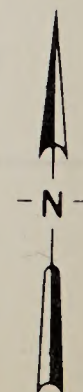
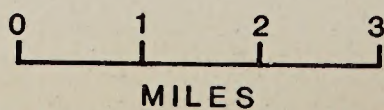


STATE



PRIVATE

Ibex Hills  
Proposal  
MAP-1



CDCA-149  
JUNE, 1988



### 3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

#### A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The overall character of the Ibex Hills WSA is primitive in nature, with the imprints of man substantially unnoticeable. However, over 35 miles of routes of travel and several past producing mines, do detract from the naturalness of the WSA.
2. Solitude: Portions of the WSA provide outstanding opportunities for solitude. The rugged terrain and vast bajadas provide areas where a sense of isolation and seclusion are available. However, the routes of travel and surface disturbances from historic mining in certain portions of the WSA are a constant reminder of man's presence in the area.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: Like with solitude, the opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation are limited in portions of the WSA. However, the adjacent administratively endorsed wilderness in Death Valley National Monument provides the potential for expanded opportunities.
4. Special Features: A portion of the WSA contains transient habitat for the desert bighorn sheep. It also contains an area of high cultural resource sensitivity and represents lands traditionally used by the Panamint Shoshone and Chemehuevi. The landforms, ecological diversity, and geological features are not unusual, they are typical of features common throughout the surrounding deserts and mountains.

#### B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: The Ibex Hills WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The WSA contains 39,111 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush ecosystem, which is represented in other WSAs recommended suitable within the CDCA.



Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,228,798
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,614,994

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of three major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

<u>Population Centers California</u>	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of nine BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation, two of which are located in the State of Nevada. The closest designated wilderness area is Domeland Wilderness, administered by Sequoia National Forest, 100 miles west of the WSA.

#### C. Manageability

The Ibex Hills WSA is manageable as wilderness. However, several key issues have a very high potential to complicate manageability of the area for wilderness. Maintenance of existing wilderness values into the foreseeable future would be very hard to assure. The WSA and surrounding area has a long and intense history of mineral exploration and



development. The area contains several high potential areas for many mineral and energy resources. Thirty-seven mining claims encumber portions of the WSA. Full scale development of any valid mining claims has a high potential to impact wilderness values in the "heart" of the WSA. Access requirements for such development would result in similar impacts.

Development, and access requirements for State and private inholdings would also seriously impair the ability to manage the area for its wilderness values. Maintenance of a designated county road would also conflict with management of the area as wilderness.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

#### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The Ibex Hills WSA is located in the Resting Spring Range and Dumont Dunes Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Areas (GRA). BLM G-E-M data in the wilderness section of the Desert Plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) in 1980 indicated that there were numerous mineral occurrences and deposits in this WSA. Almost every rock type had high potential for lead, silver, copper (all strategic minerals), barite, perlite, zinc, talc or gold. The American mine, southwest of Ibex Peak in the east part of the WSA, and the Rusty Pick, west of Buckwheat Wash in the southwest part of WSA, produced copper, silver, lead and gold. There was also gold production at the Confidence Mine in the south-central part of WSA. Also, Buckwheat and Confidence Washes had potential for placer gold. Precambrian and Cambrian-age metasediments in the Dublin Hills in the northeast part of WSA carry lead, silver, copper and gold mineralization. Perlite occurs on Sheephead Mountain (north-central part of WSA) and may occur near the junction of the Buckwheat and Confidence washes. Perlite horizons are present throughout the western Dublin Hills. Part of the deposit was covered by 14 active mining claims just northeast of the WSA boundary in December, 1979. There were known deposits of talc west of Buckwheat Wash (southwest part of WSA). At the western end of Sheephead Pass a number of geologic indicators, including fault intersections and thorium and potassium anomalies, suggested a favorable environment for those types of minerals. The alluvial area northeast of Sheephead Mountain was considered prospectively valuable for sodium and prospectively valuable for geothermal resources by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) at the time the EIS recommendations were made.

The 1980 Resting Spring Range GRA file showed two areas having moderate potential for locatable industrial minerals in the northeastern part of the WSA. Volcanic rocks on the northwest flank of the Dublin Hills showed moderate potential for the occurrence of



perlite based on known occurrences. Quaternary lake sediments south of the Dublin Hills showed moderate potential for the occurrence of bentonite clay and zeolites. The Pfizer Mining Company produced bentonite (and stockpiled zeolite) three and one-half miles south of there from similar lake deposits in 1979. The Resting Spring GRA file classified the alluvium in the northeast part of the WSA as having moderate potential for the occurrence of sodium and a smaller area as having high potential for the occurrence of geothermal resources based on the 1978 USGS classification as prospectively valuable for sodium and a potential geothermal resource area (PGRA). However, the GRA gives no indication of known occurrences of sodium in this area; therefore, its potential for occurrence is rated low under the BLM mineral resource classification system. The file and report also indicated moderate potential for the occurrence of pumice in the northeast part of the WSA based on known deposits in Quaternary-age lake deposits.

Neither the Resting Spring Range nor the Dumont Dunes GRA files showed any mining claims in the WSA as of December, 1979. The Dumont Dunes GRA report and file indicated two areas of high potential for the occurrence of precious and base metals in central and southern parts of the WSA. The area of high potential near the central part of the WSA includes five prospects and two former producers, the American and Confidence mines. The American Mine produced at least \$10,000 worth of silver ore reported at over 100 ounces of silver per ton. Nothing was known about the five prospects except that some had produced lead and copper. A small amount of gold was produced from the Confidence mine in 1934. The Dumont Dunes GRA file indicated that the northwest part of the WSA had a moderate potential for the occurrence of metals. No supporting data is provided by the GRA report, so this area is not shown on the accompanying mineral potential map.

The area of high potential for metallic minerals and talc at the southern end of the WSA includes an area of favorable geology (Precambrian metamorphic rocks in contact with Precambrian carbonate rocks) and the Rusty Pick Mine which produced lead, zinc, copper, silver and gold. The Ibex Mine, a former producer of lead, zinc and silver occurs just south of the WSA boundary. However, the Dumont Dunes file and report indicate an area having high potential for the occurrence of talc where Precambrian carbonate rocks extend north of a past producer (unspecified) and a known occurrence at the "Atlas Zone." A moderate potential zone for the occurrence of perlite is shown on Sheephead Mountain where there are known occurrences in the north-central part of the WSA. The northeast part of the WSA is shown as having moderate potential for the occurrence of sodium based on the 1978 USGS classification as prospectively valuable. The Dumont Dunes GRA report states, "No exploration or development has indicated any mineral resources of this type." Therefore the potential for the occurrence of sodium in the WSA is considered low under the BLM classification system.



2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should be Considered in the Final Recommendation: No USGS or U.S. Bureau of Mines mineral survey was completed for this WSA because it is recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

In 1982, a plan of operations was filed for gold mining at the Who Cares Mine and to build a road between this and the American Mine, both near the central part of the WSA. Little or no mining was done under the plan, possibly because of a slump in gold prices in the mid 1980's and because there is no local mill. In 1983, a plan of operations proposed mining 200 tons of talc per month from a 2,100-foot-long vein northwest of the Rusty Pick Mine in the southern part of the WSA. The 1984 7.5 minute Ibex Spring quadrangle shows underground workings at the Who Cares and American West mines which were not shown on the old 15 minute quadrangle when the GRA reports were prepared.

There are no mineral leases in the WSA. Most mining claims within the WSA are located in the southern and eastern portions of the WSA. Unpatented mining claims located within the WSA are summarized in Table 4, taken from BLM records dated January, 1988.

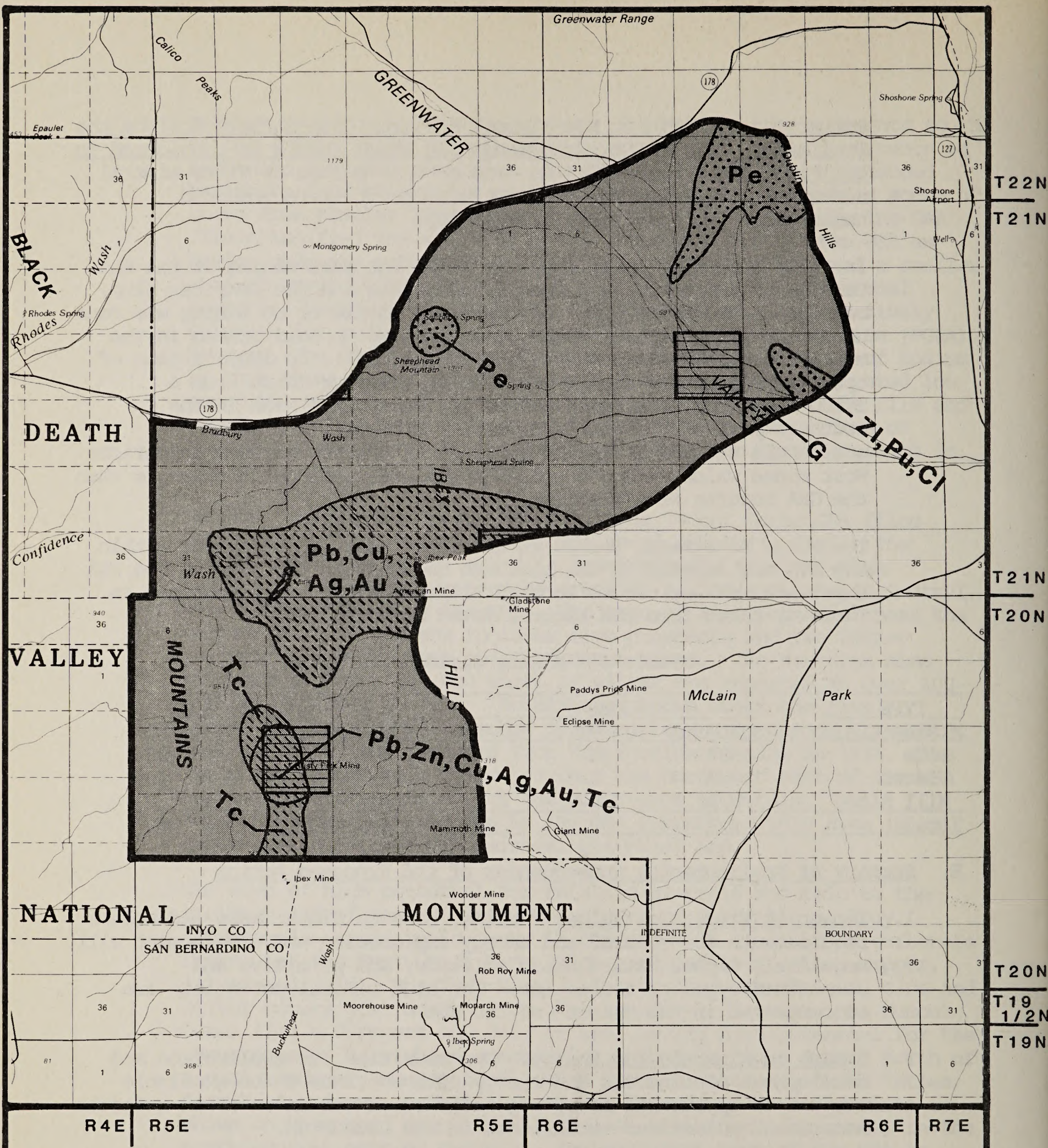
Table 4 - Mining Claims

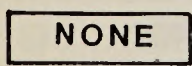




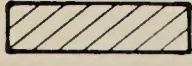
TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
MINING CLAIM						
Lode	N/A	36	36	N/A	720	720
Placer	N/A	1	1	N/A	40	40
Mill Site	N/A	0	0	N/A	0	0
Total	N/A	37	37	N/A	760	760

#### E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Noise, surface disturbance and access requirements for mineral and energy exploration and development will negatively impact naturalness, solitude, and primitive and unconfined types of recreation. The high mineral potentials are concentrated in the "heart" of the WSA.
2. Impact on Minerals and Energy: Opportunities for exploration and development of minerals and energy will continue to be available subject to applicable laws, regulations and the intense and moderate management guidelines established in the CDCA Plan.
3. Impact on Future Utility Corridor Development: Portions of the WSA are within a future utility corridor (1990-2020) identified for the State of California in the Western Regional Corridor Study (1980). This corridor was not identified or designated by the CDCA Plan. However, depending upon the final juxtaposition of WSAs ultimately designated wilderness in the CDCA, there may or may not be constraints to development of future utility corridors.







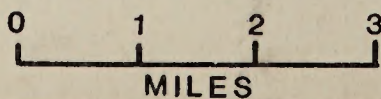
- |   |      |   |
|---|------|---|
|  | NONE | Recommended for Wilderness                  |
|  |      | Recommended for Non Wilderness              |
|  |      | Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness |
|  |      | Split Estate                                |
|  |      | State                                       |
|  |      | Private                                     |

### Ibex Hills

### Mineral Resource Potential

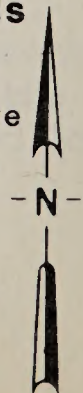
### Explanation

- |   |  |
|---|--|
|  | High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals     |
|  | Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals |
| <b>M</b>  | Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area       |
| <b>H</b>  | High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area       |



### Commodity Symbols

- |                     |                   |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Ag</b> Silver    | <b>Tc</b> Talc    |
| <b>Au</b> Gold      | <b>Zl</b> Zeolite |
| <b>Cl</b> Clay      | <b>Zn</b> Zinc    |
| <b>Cu</b> Copper    |                   |
| <b>G</b> Geothermal |                   |
| <b>Na</b> Sodium    |                   |
| <b>Pb</b> Lead      |                   |
| <b>Pe</b> Perlite   |                   |
| <b>Pu</b> Pumice    |                   |





4. Impact on Administratively Endorsed Wilderness in Death Valley National Monument: There will be no adverse impacts to management of the adjacent monument. Although the administratively endorsed wilderness would be enhanced by designation of this WSA, values in the Monument have sufficient caliber and depth that they stand on their own.
5. Impact on Cultural Resources and Native American Concerns: Culture resources will continue to be protected by applicable laws and regulations. Opportunities will also continue to be available for traditional access to collection areas.
6. Impact on Transient Desert Bighorn Sheep Habitat: There will be little likelihood that the transient habitat will ever become permanent range, given the anticipated increases in mining exploration and development.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: Comments relating to inventory criteria were of two types - those recognizing the natural values of the area and those which listed roads and mining activity, particularly in the eastern parts of the Ibex and Dublin Hills. After field checking, most of the mining areas were excluded from the WSA boundaries.
2. Study Phase: Of the seventeen letters received on this WSA, nine favored and eight opposed wilderness designation. The major reason for supporting wilderness was to act as a buffer, or as an addition to, adjacent wilderness in DVNM. Special areas which were mentioned were the Salsberry and Sheephead riparian habitats. The WSA was said to provide outstanding scenic values and research opportunities, as well as ecological, wildlife, vegetative and cultural values. Reinstatement into the WSA of portions of the eastern sides of the Dublin Hills and Ibex Hills was requested, with exclusion of a microwave station, a talc mine at Ibex Hills, developments next to the town of Shoshone, and numerous roads.



Respondents opposing wilderness cited the area's mineralization and the presence of roads, scattered mines and abandoned mining equipment. Another detraction was overflights of military aircraft.

Three responses were received to the Public Input Workbook (3/15/79). A mining company wanted a small mining area in the Ibex Hills deleted from the final inventory map (3/31/79); another company wanted further deletions in the Dublin Hills because of mining roads. The third letter was from the National Park Service (Death Valley National Monument) concurring with BLM findings and supporting wilderness which would compliment proposed wilderness in the monument.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: A wide range of comments specific to this WSA was received in response to the Draft Desert Plan. Some desired that lands on both sides of Highway 127 and/or greater acreage of nonmountainous terrain be recommended suitable for wilderness under the Protection Alternative. Others objected to the Classification of the area as "moderate use" and "intensive use" in the Balanced Alternative. The County of Inyo Board of Supervisors approved of the latter classification due to the mineralization of the region.

This WSA was one of those opposed by the National Outdoor Coalition, a coalition of mining, rockhounding, and off-road vehicle groups. A large number of club members sent in printed coupons and letters supporting this position. Conservation organizations and their members wrote many letters recommending wilderness designation for all WSAs within the CDCA.

4. Proposed Plan: Approximately 64 letters were received requesting a change in the recommendation of the Proposed Plan for this WSA from Multiple Use Class M (moderate use) to Multiple Use Class L (limited use) to protect the area's scenic and research qualities and to act as a buffer for proposed wilderness in Death Valley National Monument. The National Outdoor Coalition continued to oppose wilderness status.



# **Ibex Spring**

*CDCA 149A*







## IBEX SPRING WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-149A)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA ---

2,669 acres

The Ibex Spring WSA straddles the San Bernardino-Inyo County line within the central northeast portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The community of Shoshone is 14 miles to the north. The WSA includes 2,669 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern border of the WSA is a gravel mine access road and the western border is Death Valley National Monument (DVMN). A gravel mine access road also forms the southern border. State Route 127 is the eastern border. Portions of the WSA have been identified for inclusion in a future (1990-2020) utility corridor. A microwave communications facility and associated access road were inadvertently included within the WSA boundary during the wilderness inventory process.

The WSA was included for further consideration during the planning process only because it adjoined an area in DVMN that was, at that time, administratively endorsed as wilderness.

The majority of the WSA contains hills ranging in elevation from 1,210 to 2,180 feet. The WSA contains approximately 40% hills, 40% highly dissected fans, 10% dissected fans, and 10% alluvial fans. Creosote-covered bajadas make up the southeastern and northern portions. Internal access is limited and historical recreation use has been virtually non-existent. The vegetative composition includes a typical creosote bush scrub plant assemblage that exhibits some variability based on elevation.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0	acres recommended for wilderness
2,669	BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for the Ibex Spring WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. Future activities in the area will be controlled by moderate intensity as prescribed in the CDCA Plan. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan.



The wilderness values in the Ibex Spring WSA do not stand on their own merit. The WSA was originally delineated during development of the CDCA Plan as a natural extension of administratively endorsed wilderness in the adjacent DVNM. It was recognized, however, that the WSA is not manageable as wilderness unless the adjacent area in DVNM remained administratively endorsed as wilderness. The adjacent portion of the Monument no longer has administrative endorsement as wilderness. There are approximately 1.5 miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.

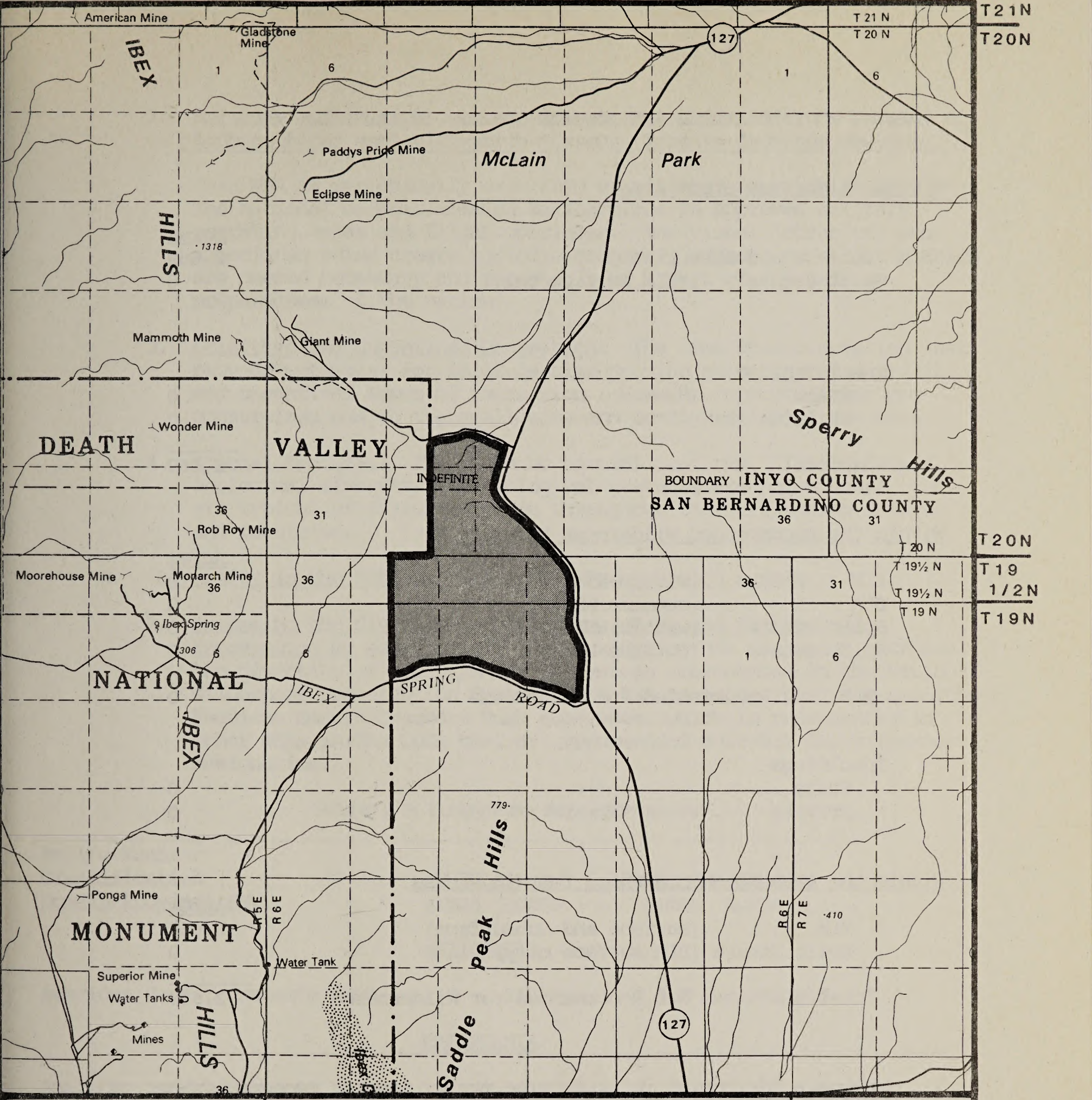
Designation of the area as wilderness would not contribute any additional unique or distinct features to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Other WSAs in the California Desert that are recommended suitable offer a much more extensive and diverse representation of desert wilderness values.

The naturalness of this small WSA is impacted by a developed microwave communication site and a 1.25 mile maintained access route. The entire WSA has high potential for geothermal resources and approximately one third of the area has moderate potentials for sand and gravel. The topography within the area is favorable for a geothermal generating plant site. The WSA is within a future (1990- 2020) utility corridor identified for California in the Western Regional Corridor Study (1980). Depending upon the final juxtaposition of WSAs ultimately designated wilderness in the CDCA, there may or may not be constraints to planning and development of such corridors.

The wildlife and vegetative resources within the area are typical of the surrounding desert. The area contains no unusual plants or State or Federally listed threatened or endangered plant or animal species. No known areas of cultural resource sensitivity are located within the WSA. Traditional Native American use of the area includes collection of plants and hunting activities.

The WSA would be best managed and maintained under nonwilderness and moderate intensity, multiple use management guidelines as prescribed in the CDCA Plan. Opportunities for a quality wilderness experience are very limited.





NONE

RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS

RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS

RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS

LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS

LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS

SPLIT ESTATE

SPLIT ESTATE

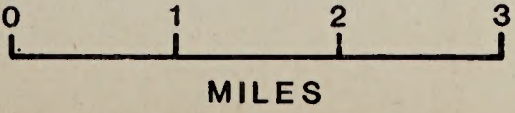
STATE

STATE

PRIVATE

PRIVATE

Ibex Spring  
Proposal  
MAP-1



CDCA 149A  
JUNE, 1988



TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

Within Wilderness Study Area

	<u>Acres</u>
BLM (surface and subsurface)	2,669
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings	
State	0
Private	0
Total	<u>2,669</u>

Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary

	<u>Acres</u>
BLM (within WSA)	0
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness	<u>0</u>
Inholdings	
State	0
Private	0

Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness

	<u>Acres</u>
BLM (surface and subsurface)	2,669
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Lands Not Recommended for Wilderness	<u>2,669</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The area generally appears to have been affected primarily by natural forces with man's imprint substantially unnoticeable. The microwave communications site and associated route of travel are exceptions.



2. Solitude: This area does provide potential for solitude because of topographical variation which screens visitors from one another.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The same characteristics that provide potential for solitude also provide potentials for primitive and unconfined types of recreation. However, opportunities are constrained due to the small size and configuration of the area.
4. Special Features: There are no special features. The landforms, ecological diversity and geological features are not unusual, they are typical of features common throughout the surrounding deserts and mountains.

#### B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: The Ibex Spring WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The WSA contains 2,669 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush ecosystem, which is represented in other WSAs in the CDCA that are recommended suitable for wilderness designation.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,265,240
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,651,436

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of five major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.



Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

<u>Population Centers</u>	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	1 1,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of nine BLM WSAs, two of which are located in the State of Nevada, that are recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness area is Domeland Wilderness, administered by Sequoia National Forest, 100 air miles west of the WSA.

#### C. Manageability

The Ibex Spring WSA is not manageable as wilderness.

The administrative endorsement of the land in the adjacent DVMN was dropped. Therefore, the WSA could not be managed as a logical extension of wilderness in the Monument.

The WSA is less than two miles in width and three miles in length and has limited opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation. If the WSA were designated wilderness, the microwave communications tower and associated access road in the southeast corner of the WSA, that was overlooked in the inventory, should be included.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

#### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The Ibex Spring WSA (CDCA 149A) is located in the BLM Dumont Dunes Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M data in the wilderness section of the Desert Plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) in 1980 indicated that this WSA had relatively little potential for the occurrence of



metallic and nonmetallic minerals and speculative potential for radioactive mineral deposits. This WSA was recognized as having medium potential for the occurrence of geothermal energy and as being topographically favorable for generator plant siting.

The Ibex Spring GRA file indicated that no mining claims had been filed in this WSA as of December 12, 1979. The GRA file also indicated that the geological environment of the WSA is unfavorable for the occurrence of metallic minerals in most of the WSA and that information is "insufficient to classify" in the east-central part where there are granitic outcrops. The geologic environment on the WSA was classified as unfavorable for locatable nonmetallic minerals. There was insufficient information to classify the potential for the occurrence of radioactive minerals for most of the WSA, however, the east-central portion of the WSA is underlain by granitic outcrops, which was considered as having a low potential for the occurrence of radioactive minerals based on a favorable geologic environment.

The northern part of the WSA was classified as having high potential for the occurrence of sodium compounds based on the 1978 U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) classification as prospectively valuable (PV). The entire WSA lies within an area classified in the GRA file as having moderate potential for the occurrence of geothermal resources based on the 1978 USGS classification as a potential geothermal resource area (PGRA). The Dumont Dunes GRA report does not discuss the rationale for the geothermal classification.

The GRA file assessed the northern and southeastern parts of the WSA as having moderate potential for the occurrence of sand and gravel resources. The GRA report based this assessment on past production from a Caltrans material site partially within the northern part of the WSA. The southeastern part of the WSA has moderate potential for the occurrence of sand and gravel resources based on areas of rock, sand and alluvium which are reasonably accessible and which might be expected to be used, at least for road maintenance, in the foreseeable future. The GRA file contains information submitted by the Inyo County Planning Commission stating that an estimated 300 cubic yards of sand and gravel will be removed annually from the material site for patching and shoulder support of Highway 127.

2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should be Considered in the Final Recommendation: No USGS or U.S. Bureau of Mines mineral survey was completed for this WSA because it is recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

The 1982 BLM Geothermal PV Classification map shows that Saratoga Spring, seven miles to the southwest of the WSA, has 82-degree Fahrenheit water, and an unnamed spring near Tecopa, eight miles to the northeast, has 108-degree Fahrenheit water. Because the WSA is favorable for the siting of a geothermal generator plant, the



geologic environment is favorable, and geothermal water is known in the area, the potential for the occurrence of geothermal resources in the WSA is high under the current BLM classification system. Because there are no known occurrences of sodium mineral in this area, the potential for the occurrence of sodium is downgraded to low under the present BLM classification system.

As of December, 1987, there were no unpatented mining claims in the WSA on record with BLM.

E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Noise, surface disturbance and access requirements for energy exploration and development will negatively impact naturalness, solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation. The entire WSA has high potential for geothermal resources. Development of the sand and gravel reserves along the north and east side of the WSA will also negatively impact values.
2. Impact on Minerals and Energy: Opportunities for exploration and development of minerals and energy will continue to be available subject to applicable laws, regulations and the moderate intensity management guidelines established in the CDCA Plan. The California Department of Transportation will be able to utilize the sand and gravel reserves for maintenance of the State highway system.
3. Impact on Future Utility Corridor Development: The WSA is within a planned utility corridor (1990-2020) for the State of California as identified in the Western Regional Corridor Study (1980). Although this corridor was not identified or designated in the CDCA Plan, opportunities will be available for planning and development of future corridors that are necessary to meet the long-term growth needs of Southwestern United States.
4. Impact on Native American Concerns: Traditional access to collection sites will continue to be available.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.







1. Inventory Phase: Comments stated that the area met the Wilderness Act criteria and should be designated for further wilderness study. Rechecks in the field supported this view.
2. Study Phase: Two letters were received on this WSA. Both favored wilderness designation because of its contiguity to Death Valley National Monument. They also felt corridors should be designated where appropriate.

One response was received to the Public Input Workbook (3/15/79). It defined the area as a desirable extension of wilderness in Death Valley.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: No public comments specific to this WSA were received in response to the Draft Plan Alternatives. However, this WSA was one of those opposed by the National Outdoor Coalition (NOC), a coalition of mining, rockhounding and off-highway vehicle groups. A large number of club members sent in printed coupons supporting this position. Conservation organizations and their members wrote many letters recommending wilderness designation for all WSAs within the CDCA. The County of Inyo's Board of Supervisors opposed wilderness designation for this area because of its mineral potential; they complimented the BLM for recommending multiple use management for this area in all Draft Plan Alternatives.
4. Proposed Plan: There were no specific comments on this particular WSA in response to the Proposed Plan. Motorized vehicle groups and conservation organizations maintained the same positions stated for the Draft Plan Alternatives, as did the Inyo County Board of Supervisors.



# **Nopah Range**

*CDCA 150*



Nobish Range

CHINA



## NOPAH RANGE WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-150)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA ---

132,465 acres

The Nopah Range WSA is located in Inyo County in the northeast portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) along the California-Nevada stateline. The community of Shoshone is less than one mile from the westernmost tip of the WSA. The WSA includes 126,919 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), 5,367 acres owned by the State of California, 179 acres of private land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northeastern boundary of the area is the California-Nevada State line and the eastern boundaries are gravel and paved roads. The Old Spanish Trail Highway bounds the area to the south. The western boundary is very irregular, first following topographic lines, dirt roads, and then State Highway 178. It deviates from the highway in the south-central portion of Chicago Valley to avoid private land and associated surface disturbances. It again joins the highway in the north central portion of Chicago Valley. State Highway 178 also makes up the northern boundary. The realignment of this highway that was completed prior to 1978 is reflected on Map 1. However, this realignment was not reflected in the original topographic maps used in delineating the boundary during the WSA inventory process. There was never any intention for portions of the WSA to extend west across the paved highway.

The WSA is dominated by the Nopah Range and the southern portion of the Resting Springs Range, the east side of Chicago Valley, and the western bajada of Pahrump Valley. The area contains approximately 35% mountains, 30% alluvial fans, 10% dissected fans, 5% badlands, 5% playas, 5% plains, 5% riverwashes, 3% highly dissected fans and 2% hills. Both mountain ranges are rugged and folded. Yellow, red and brown colored striations occur throughout the upper elevations of the Nopah Range. The grayish-brown bajadas that surround the mountains appear as low, moderate slopes. Chicago Valley is predominantly flat, with many winding, light colored washes throughout its lower drainage. The mountains appear barren, with creosote and other desert shrub and grass species. The surrounding bajadas and valley have more vegetative cover, basically composed of creosote, cacti, yucca, and other desert shrub species, such as desert willow, mesquite and catclaw species. The lower drainage vegetation appears dark green in contrast to the surrounding light gray-green vegetation on the surrounding bajadas and the sparse barren appearance of the mountains.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced, and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.



A 1982 amendment to the CDCA Plan formulated a second partial suitability recommendation in which approximately 60% of the WSA was recommended suitable for wilderness.

2.	<u>RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE</u>	83,334	acres recommended for wilderness
		47,051	BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

Partial wilderness (62% suitable) is the recommendation for the Nopah Range WSA. The BLM recommends that 79,868 federal acres be included in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). The remaining 47,051 acres in this WSA are released for uses other than wilderness. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts. In addition to the Federal acreage recommended for wilderness, BLM recommends that 3453 acres of State land and 13 acres of private land be acquired through exchange or purchase and designated as wilderness. With acquisition of these inholdings, a total of 83,334 acres are recommended for wilderness. Appendix 1 lists all inholdings and provides additional information on their acquisition.

The balanced alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative, as outlined in the CDCA Plan.

The recommended suitable portion of the WSA possesses outstanding wilderness character which exemplifies the criteria described in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964. The Nopah Range exhibits an outstanding primitive character which includes the pristine limestone lands of the west slope cliffs and untrammelled rugged peaks. The suitability recommendation will preclude any further vehicular use of approximately 43 miles of primitive access routes of travel.

Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation are present which challenge the endurance and skill of the backpacker, peak climber and nature enthusiast. The 18 mile crest of the Nopah Range provides a rugged challenge; taking the backpacker from 2,500 feet at Emigrant Pass, along the crest at over 5,000 feet to Nopah Peak itself which sits at 6,394 feet, and finally along the craggy northern portion of the range ending at the Shaw Mine. Along this trip, the hiker may observe desert bighorn sheep while passing through a variety of plant assemblages including the creosote bush scrub, desert dry wash woodland, and a mix of blackbrush scrub and pinyon-juniper woodland in the higher elevations. The rugged terrain and deep canyons allow the visitor to escape any intimation of our modern industrial society. The visitor can experience a feeling of solitude at the "top" of the Mojave Desert while sitting on Nopah Peak.

The recommended suitable area supports a population of desert bighorn sheep. The entire WSA does not contain any unusual plant assemblages or any Federally listed threatened or endangered plant or animal species. One plant "eligible" for State listing has been collected from within the



suitable portion of the WSA. A State listed Rare and Endangered plant may also be located within the WSA. Habitats for desert tortoise, golden eagle and prairie falcon are also known to occur in the suitable area (See Special Features).

The significance of the wilderness values in the recommended suitable portion of the WSA exceed the recognized mineral resources of the area. Portions of the area recommended suitable have moderate potentials for sodium, oil and gas, limestone, dolomite, and silica and a high potential for geothermal resources. However, only one mining claim encumbers the suitable area. There are no current plans of operations in the suitable portion. In contrast, over 3000 acres of the nonsuitable portion of the WSA is encumbered with unpatented mining claims.

Wilderness designation of the recommended suitable portion of the WSA will pose only one critical manageability issue: acquisition of inholdings. Acquisition of the state land is not considered to be a significant problem. The BLM anticipates a formal request by the State of California to exchange this land upon wilderness designation. However, acquisition of the split estate parcel along the southeastern border is essential to avoid creating a "hole" in an otherwise definable and manageable wilderness boundary.

Access to historic collection sites for Native Americans will be limited by designation. A portion of the Chicago Valley Wild Horse and Burro Herd Management Area and the Horsethief Springs Grazing Allotment is within the suitable portion of the WSA. Options for use of motorized equipment for the gathering of wild horses may be limited.

The nonsuitable portions of the WSA do not compare with the scenic splendor of the suitable area. The portions recommended nonsuitable do contain important resource values, but are lacking in quality wilderness values. However, throughout virtually the entire nonsuitable area, the long-term impacts to natural values will be minimized due to the low intensity, multiple use land management guidelines prescribed in the CDCA Plan.

The nonsuitable portions of the WSA in general contain higher mineral potentials and more surface disturbances. Portions of Chicago Valley and the Resting Spring Range were not recommended suitable because of the existence of access routes and impacts to naturalness from previous mining related activities.

The westernmost extension of the WSA is recommended nonsuitable primarily because of high and moderate mineral potential. Among other mineral values, this area has identified borate potentials. All of the borate production in the United States comes from the CDCA, and a majority of that from deposits near Boron. Boron's deposits have an expected life of 25 years: after that time, future borate requirements would need to be met by areas such as this.

The nonsuitable portion of the WSA that includes the bajada between the stateline and the "Old Traction Road" includes the Pahrump Valley Grazing Allotment. This road originally was built to haul borax from Death Valley



and is still used today for recreational off-highway vehicle travel. This bajada also contains other north-south access routes and numerous range improvements that mar naturalness.

The nonsuitability recommendation will not affect the Public Water Reserve (PWR) withdrawal. This PWR has been recommended for revocation.

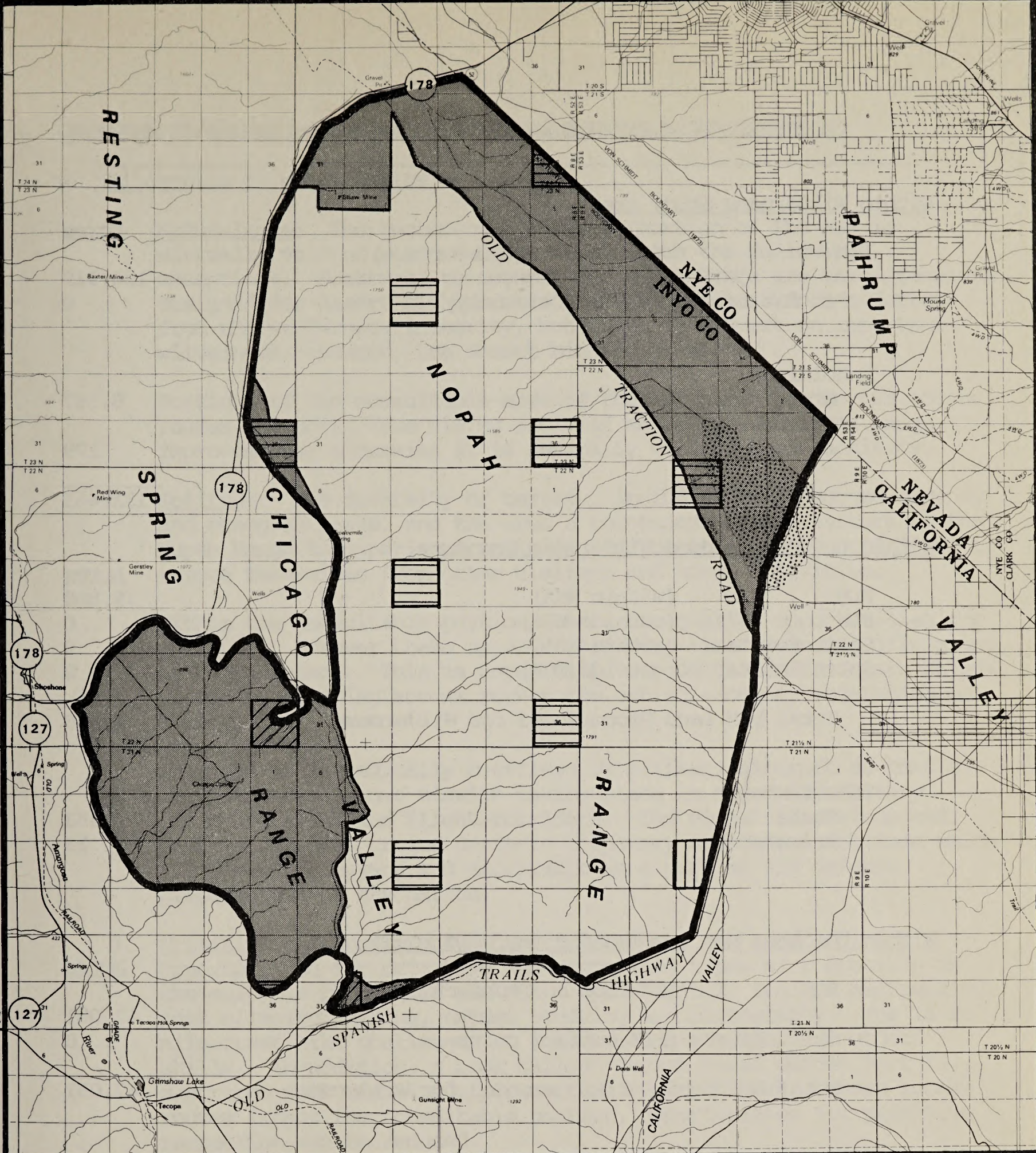


T24N  
T23N

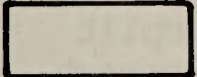


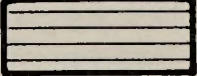


T23N  
T22N

T22N  
T21N

T21N  
T20N



R7E R7E R8E R8E R9E R9E R10E

- |   |   |  |              |
|---|---|--|--------------|
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS                  |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |  | STATE        |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | PRIVATE      |

Nopah Range  
Proposal  
MAP-1

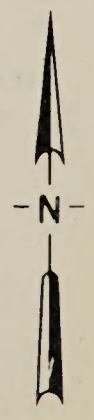
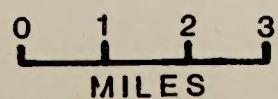




TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

Within Wilderness Study Area

		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	
		126,919
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		5,367
Private		179
Total		<u>132,465</u>

Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary

		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	79,868
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>79,868</u>

Inholdings <sup>1</sup>		
State		3,453
Private		13

Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness

		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	
		47,051
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>47,051</u>

---

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1 is a detailed description of inholdings and split estate tracts included within the study. For purposes of this report, split estate lands are defined only as those lands with Federal surface and non Federal subsurface (minerals). Lands that have Federal minerals but non Federal surface should be classified in this report by the owner of the surface estate.



### 3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

#### A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The recommended suitable portion of the WSA is virtually void of all human intrusions with the following exceptions. Scattered throughout the Nopah Range are three guzzlers designed for desert bighorn sheep. These guzzlers do not detract from the wilderness integrity, but instead, support an important wilderness resource, the desert bighorn sheep.

Portions of the nonsuitable area of the WSA contain numerous access routes and scars from mining activity as well as numerous range improvements; otherwise it is generally void of human activity.

2. Solitude: The diversity of terrain, including deep, rugged canyons and craggy peaks, and the area's remoteness allow visitors to the Nopah Range to experience unlimited and outstanding opportunities to remove themselves from other visitors and human activities.

Within the nonsuitable portion, there are quality opportunities for solitude. However these opportunities are limited in specific areas by human impact. This is especially true on the northeastern bajada where the existing access routes are not screened by vegetation or topography.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: There are outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation in the suitable portion of the WSA. Opportunities include backpacking, peak climbing, hiking, nature studying and photography. The 18-20 mile crest hike challenges an individual's stamina and outdoor skills. In addition, a book called "Desert Peaks Guide" Part II, describes peak climbing opportunities on Nopah Peak. Where access routes impact the nonsuitable portion, opportunities for primitive recreation can be reduced.
4. Special Features: The entire range of the Nopah bighorn sheep herd is within the suitable portion of the WSA. This species is considered BLM "sensitive." In the 1970's, the size of the herd was estimated at ten individuals. Primarily due to the construction of three watering guzzlers, the size of the herd is now thought to be 100 animals. The Resting Spring Range in the nonsuitable portion of the WSA also contains transient bighorn sheep range.



Two historical golden eagle eyries and one prairie falcon eyrie, as well as associated foraging habitat, are located within the suitable portion of the WSA. A total of approximately 20 square miles of desert tortoise habitat, with densities of 20 to 50 animals per square mile, exists within the suitable and nonsuitable area. The tortoise is considered a BLM sensitive species and is under status review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for possible listing as a threatened or endangered species.

Stephens penstemon (Penstemon stephensii), which is State listed as Rare and Endangered, may be located in the WSA. The suitable portion of the WSA contains the ivory-spined agave (Agave utahensis var. eborispina). This plant is eligible for State listing.

The Chicago Valley Wild Horse and Burro Herd Management Area overlaps a portion of the suitable, and virtually the entire nonsuitable portion of the WSA. In 1980 there was an estimated population of 28 wild horses and 28 wild burros.

The area has been traditionally used by the Panamint Shoshone, Southern Ute, River Chemehuevi, Southern Chemehuevi, and Mohave tribes. A Panamint Shoshone and Southern Ute collection area has been reported in a contemporary context in the south central portion of the area recommended suitable. Other sites are known in the nonsuitable portion.

#### B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: The suitable portion of the Nopah Range WSA is one of many WSAs within the CDCA that represent the spectacular scenery, varied ecosystems, biological and geological features and outstanding wilderness present in the Mojave Desert portion of the California Desert. Included within the WSA is the entire range for the Nopah bighorn sheep herd as well as several historic raptor eyries. The WSA contains 126,919 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush (Larrea) ecosystem.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification <u>Domain/Province/PNV</u>	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,140,990
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,527,186



2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of three major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

<u>Population Centers</u> <u>California</u>	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of eight BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness area is Golden Trout Wilderness, administered by the Inyo National Forest, 110 miles west of the WSA.

#### C. Manageability

The recommended suitable portion of the Nopah Range WSA is manageable as wilderness. Acquisition of state and split estate inholdings will be critical for control of the boundary and to ensure continuity of management philosophy. Virtually all boundaries of the suitable portion are existing routes of travel with the exception of the northern boundary. The northern boundary of the suitable area, as reflected on Map 1, is somewhat awkward. The jutting tip should be eliminated and the boundary moved south approximately one-half mile to the Township line.

There is only one mining claim in the suitable portion of the WSA so the likelihood for mineral development is low.

Presently, three big game guzzlers for desert bighorn sheep are located in the Nopah Range. Maintenance on these guzzlers is needed approximately two times per year. Maintenance normally requires repairs of tanks and catchments after flash floods. Presently, an agreement with the California Department of Fish and Game allows for the use of



mechanized equipment for transportation to these sites. Transportation is normally via helicopter or a four-wheel drive vehicle in wash systems. After wilderness designation, motorized use may still be required subject to a new agreement which ensures that wilderness resources will not be degraded.

Opportunities available for management of livestock within the Horsethief Springs Grazing Allotment will be limited by wilderness designation. Limitations will be placed on the use of motorized vehicles in the suitable portion. However, grazing will be allowed to continue at existing levels.

Manageability of the nonsuitable portion of the WSA as wilderness would be very difficult and complicated. Over 100 mining claims encumber over 3,000 acres of the nonsuitable portions. The likelihood of mineral development is considered very high. The nonsuitable portions contain numerous range improvements, installed in the 1960's, that require regular inspection and maintenance. Traditional off-highway vehicle use also occurs on the numerous routes of travel within the nonsuitable portions of the WSA. Signing and enforcement to exclude this use would be difficult to accomplish.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The Nopah Range WSA (CDCA-150) is located in the BLM Resting Spring Range Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M data in the wilderness portion of the Desert plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) indicated in 1980 that this WSA contained occurrences of metallic and locatable industrial minerals, and geologically favorable environments for saline and radioactive minerals, geothermal energy, oil and gas and common mineral materials. G-E-M data in the EIS stated that the Nopah (Shaw) mine in the northern part of the Nopah Range (north portion of the WSA) shipped high-grade lead-silver-zinc ore in the 1940s. Mines at the southern end of the mountain range in the South Nopah Range WSA immediately to the south of the WSA were major producers of lead, silver, and zinc. The EIS indicated that this favorable mineral and geologic environment extends from the producers in the southern Nopahs through the WSA to the Nopah mine in the north. An excellent potential for the occurrence of industrial minerals such as limestone, silica, and dolomite was addressed in the EIS for the Nopah mountain range in the WSA. The EIS stated that the Anaconda Mining Company was, at that time, currently exploring a zeolite deposit barely outside the southwest boundary of the WSA. This deposit was known to continue north and east into the southwest part of the WSA.



Volcanogenic sediments in the southwestern part of the WSA were assessed in the 1980 GRA as having a potential for borates and bentonite as well as zeolites. The 1980 GRA recognized the 1978 U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) classifications, indicating that there was moderate potential for sodium occurrences in the alluvial areas in the eastern and western parts of the WSA; a potential geothermal resource area (PGRA) in the western part of the WSA; and a prospectively valuable area for oil and gas in the eastern part of the WSA. Sand and gravel resources were also known to be present from information in the 1980 GRA files. An area of about three square miles in the southwestern part of the WSA was classified as having a high potential for the occurrence of zeolites. This area in the WSA also contains zones of 80 to 100% zeolite (Sheppard and Gude, 1968, Distribution and Gneiss of Authigenic silicate Minerals in Tuffs of Pleistocene Lake Tecopa, U.S. Geological Survey Prof. Paper 597, Figure 4, Table 10).

Northwest of the high potential zone in the southwest portion of the WSA, a moderate potential zone for the occurrence of zeolites was classified in the 1980 GRA file. This same area in the western part of the WSA was assessed as having moderate potential for the occurrence of borates based on a favorable geologic environment (buried Tertiary-age rocks), borate recovery from a spring in 1882-1890 (two miles south of the WSA), and past production of borates from the Gerstley mine, only two miles north of this zone. The 1980 GRA report assessed the potential for the occurrence of sodium and potassium compounds as moderate in the southwestern part of the WSA, and the potential for the occurrence of sodium compounds as moderate in the western and eastern parts of the WSA. The Nopah Range GRA report, in 1980, classified about one square mile in the northern part of the WSA around the Nopah mine as having high potential for the occurrence of lead based on past production. The 1980 GRA report classified the southwestern part of the WSA as having high potential for the occurrence of geothermal resources because it is classified by USGS as potentially valuable and has known hot springs occurrences in or near the WSA. The 1980 GRA report classified the eastern part of the WSA as having medium potential for the occurrence of oil and gas based on the USGS prospectively valuable classification coupled with a favorable geologic environment (overthrust belt). The GRA files show a small area next to Highway 178, on the southwest edge of the WSA, as having high potential for the occurrence of sand and gravel based on a CalTrans material site at this location.

2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should be Considered in the Final Recommendation: A mineral survey of the suitable portion of the WSA was conducted by the USGS and U.S. Bureau of Mines (USBM) during the period from 1982 to 1983. USBM released mineral assessment information for the portion of the WSA recommended suitable for wilderness designation in open-file report MLA 10-85. No joint report has been released by the USGS and USBM as of



December, 1987. The USBM report concluded that the Nancy-Ann (Nopah) mine, which produced 153 tons of lead-silver-zinc ore during the period from 1925-1928, contains resources of about 650 ounces of silver, 20,000 pounds of lead, and 63,000 pounds of zinc. The California Division of Mines (CDMG) indicated in their 1986 Open-File Report 86-10 SAC, Mineral Land Classification of the... Stewart Valley 15-Minute Quadrangle..., that the area around the Nopah mine has "hypothetical resources" of the above metals. There is a moderate potential for occurrence of these resources under the BLM classification system. The USBM report data appears to support the moderate potential classification on the accompanying Mineral Resource Potential Map, a change from the 1980 GRA high potential classification.

In 1987 plans were announced by AFG Industries, the nation's second largest glass maker, to build a major plant in the Victorville area, about 155 miles from silica deposits in this WSA. The present silica source for AFG is near the Nevada border, about the same distance as the Nopah Range in the WSA. The CDMG report shows large areas of "hypothetical resources" for limestone, dolomite and silica in the central and southwestern parts of the WSA. BLM classification for the potential for occurrence of these resources is considered as "moderate" based on these data; a change from the 1980 GRA low to unknown potential for occurrence of these resources.

In 1983, a plan of operation was filed for placer gold mining in the eastern part of the WSA; however, the plan was later withdrawn.

Unpatented mining claims in the WSA are summarized in the following Table taken from BLM records dated December, 1987.

Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
MINING CLAIM						
Lode	1	42	43	20	840	860
Placer	0	56	56	0	2,240	2,240
Mill Site	0	2	2	0	10	10
Tunnel Site	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1	100	101	20	3,090	3,110

E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Existing high quality wilderness values will be maintained on the portion of the WSA that is recommended suitable. Currently there is only one mining claim in this portion, so there is little likelihood for mineral development.







In the portion of the WSA not recommended suitable, naturalness, opportunities for solitude, and opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation will be adversely impacted from mining related activities. There are identified mineral values and 100 mining claims that encumber over 3,000 acres of the nonsuitable portion. However, impacts will be minimized to the extent possible through the CDCA Plan which stipulated that this area be managed under low intensity prescriptions to protect sensitive resources.

2. Impact on Minerals: Virtually the entire WSA has identified mineral potential. Within the suitable portion, opportunities for exploration and development will be virtually nonexistent after wilderness designation. In the nonsuitable portion, opportunities will continue to be available subject to applicable laws, regulations and the low intensity management prescriptions established in the CDCA Plan.
3. Impact on Wildlife Habitat and Sensitive Plant Species: All of the resident sheep habitat and identified sensitive plant species in the WSA are located within the portion recommended for wilderness. The habitat will therefore receive permanent protection from activities that alter the natural environment. Opportunities for maintenance of existing water sources for the sheep will be available, but may be constrained by vehicle use restrictions.

Adverse impacts to desert tortoise and raptor foraging habitat will be virtually nonexistent in the suitable portion.

Mineral exploration and development will have the potential to negatively impact the transient bighorn sheep habitat located within the Resting Spring Range, desert tortoise habitat, and any unidentified sensitive plant species in the nonsuitable portion. However, low intensity management guidelines will help minimize the likelihood of significant adverse impacts.

4. Impact on Native American Concerns: Wilderness designation will preclude vehicular access to traditional gathering sites within the southcentral portion of the area recommended for wilderness designation. Traditional methods of access within the nonsuitable portion will not be affected.
5. Impact on Management of Wild Horses and Burros: Opportunities will not be available for the use of motorized equipment to gather excess animals within the portion of the WSA designated wilderness.
6. Impact on Livestock Management: The Pahrump Valley Grazing Allotment is not within the area recommended suitable for wilderness. Therefore, there will be no constraints on the use of mechanized equipment for maintenance and development of range improvements for livestock management.



Options for the development of range improvements, in the portion of the Horsethief Springs Grazing Allotment within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA, will be constrained somewhat after wilderness designation.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: Comments on file addressed the mineral potential of the area. Others agreed with the findings in the narrative.
2. Study Phase: Of the 25 comments received on this WSA, 13 favored wilderness designation. Opportunities for primitive recreation were said to be particularly good in this WSA. Pahrump and Nopah Peaks were mentioned as prime areas for climbing; both the valley and the range systems could be fully appreciated in relatively short traverses. The Nopah Range was described as being very rugged with some beautiful canyons and cliffs. Views from the top of the Nopahs toward Death Valley and toward the Spring Mountains in Nevada were outstanding. Several respondents specified wildlife which they felt needed protection including tarantulas, hawks, deer, striped whipsnakes, Mojave patch-nosed snakes, zebra-tailed lizards and red racers. Vegetation near springs as well as barrel cacti were noted as being unique in the area. Geographic and educational values were mentioned, and one letter urged protection for a cabin built from handhewn logs. Two boundary changes suggested: 1) exclude the southern part of the Nopah Range for mining and roads, and 2) limit the Chicago Valley exclusion to those holdings not deemed worthy of acquisition and rehabilitation. One letter suggested that the road between State Route 127 and 178 should be opened.

The letters opposing wilderness designation were mostly concerned with existing mines and potential mineral development. Borates, saline materials, and geothermal potential were mentioned. Sights and sounds from motorized vehicles, mines, roads, and nearby community activities were listed as detracting from the area's wilderness quality and primitive recreation potential. One commented, ". . . all its scenic beauty can be appreciated from the road."



Two comments were received through the Public Input Workbook (3/15/79). One respondent felt the area should become wilderness to protect rare plant species. The second urged reducing the size of the wilderness area by moving the boundaries away from the highways.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: Recommendations for the WSA ranged from designating the entire area as Class "M" (Moderate use) and as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) to designating the entire area as suitable for wilderness. The National Outdoor Coalition (NOC) a coalition of mining, rockhounding and off-highway vehicle groups recommended that the portion of this WSA shown as Class C in the Use Alternative should be designated wilderness. A large number of coalition members sent in letters and coupons supporting this position. The Inyo County Board of Supervisors also recommended this same area for wilderness. They believed other parts of the WSA were needed for mining and agriculture. Conservation groups supported wilderness designation for the entire WSA. Many letters echoed this point of view.
4. Proposed Plan: There were practically no specific comments on this particular WSA in response to the Proposed Plan. Motorized vehicle groups and conservation organizations maintained the same positions stated for the Draft Plan Alternative, as did the Inyo County Board of Supervisors.
5. 1982 Plan Amendments: In 1982, the Inyo County Board of Supervisors proposed two amendments to change the wilderness recommendation to unsuitable for two areas which were believed to have mineral potential. The first amendment addressed an area of three square miles near the Shaw Mine, to be changed to Class L (limited use). The second amendment proposed changing the Resting Springs Area portion of the WSA to Class M (moderate use). The amendments were approved.

The two amendments were treated together by almost all respondents, with 223 opposed and nine in favor.

Opponents of the proposed change to a nonsuitable recommendation included 11 different conservation-oriented organizations who emphasized the need for mineral surveys by the U.S. Geological Survey, and recommended deferment of consideration of amendments until those surveys had been completed. They requested protection

for habitat in the Nopah Range for bighorn sheep, eagles, and other wildlife. One respondent mentioned that several unusual cactus gardens are present in the Shaw Mine Region. Comments on the Resting Springs area urged the protection of cultural resources, scenic resources, and superior samples of desert pavement.

Proponents of the amendments included three off-highway vehicle and rockhounding organizations. They gave no specific reasons for their position.



The State of California Lands Commission stated that the new recommendation for the Resting Springs Area might facilitate access to some inholdings which the State either owns or retains the mineral rights. The State Department of Parks and Recreation, Office of Historic Preservation, recommended against the amendments until cultural resources data could be completed and documentation provided on compliance with procedures of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the CDCA Programmatic Memorandum of Agreement. The State of California Resources Agency opposed the Shaw Mine amendment due to impacts on the bighorn sheep in the area; they opposed the Resting Springs Area change because it would reduce protection of densely concentrated cultural resources and bighorn sheep. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service opposed both amendments because of detrimental effects on bighorn sheep.



APPENDIX 1  
ESTIMATED COSTS OF ACQUISITION OF NON-FEDERAL HOLDINGS WITHIN  
AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR DESIGNATION  
NOPAH RANGE WSA (CDCA-150)

PARCEL No.	LEGAL DESCRIPTION				NUMBER OF OWNERS	TYPE OF OWNERSHIP BY ESTATE		PRESENTLY PROPOSED FOR ACQUISITION	PREFERRED METHOD OF ACQUISITION	ESTIMATED COST OF ACQUISITION	
	TWNSHP	RNG	SEC	MERIDIAN		SURFACE ESTATE	SUBSURFACE ESTATE			LAND COSTS (\$1000)	PROCESSING COSTS (\$1000)
1	21N.	8E.	16	SBM	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
2	21N.	9E.	16	SBM	1	FEDERAL	PRIVATE	YES	PURCHASE	15.0	0.85
3	22N.	8E.	16	SBM	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
4	22N.	8E.	36	SBM	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
5	22N.	9E.	16	SBM	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
6	23N.	8E.	16	SBM	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
7	23N.	8E.	36	SBM	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0

These figures were derived from Bureau Land Records and provide for more detail than GIS estimates and therefore may differ from acreage summaries in Table 1.



# **South Nopah Range**

*CDCA 150A*







## SOUTH NOPAH RANGE WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-150A)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA —

6,626 acres

The South Nopah Range WSA is located in Inyo County within the northeastern portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The small community of Tecopa is three miles to the west. The WSA includes 5,759 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), 647 acres owned by the State of California and 220 acres of private land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern boundary of this triangular WSA is the Old Spanish Trails Highway. The southern boundary first follows an access road to the Gunsight Mine and then traverses through the Nopah Range Mountains, avoiding patented mining claims. The eastern boundary is a gravel road.

The area is composed primarily of mountains and alluvial fans (bajada). Elevations vary from 1,490 to 4,238 feet. The dominant feature is the southern portion of the Nopah Range. The range is rugged and folded with color striations throughout, composed of Precambrian and Cambrian sedimentary rocks. The western bajada of the South Nopah Range WSA is comprised of a moderately low, rolling slope that appears light gray-brown, becoming lighter toward the valley floor. The eastern portion of the WSA contains portions of California Valley. The vegetative composition of the area includes a typical creosote bush shrub assemblage that exhibits some variability based upon elevation.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced, and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0	acres recommended for wilderness
5,759	BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for the South Nopah Range WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. Future activities in the area will be controlled by a combination of low and moderate intensity management as prescribed in the CDCA Plan. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan.



The high potential energy and mineral resources of the WSA are of much greater value than the significance of the area as wilderness. Designation of the area as wilderness would not contribute any additional unique or distinct features to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Other WSAs in the California Desert that are recommended suitable offer a much more extensive and diverse representation of desert wilderness values. There are approximately 11 miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.

The WSA abuts the Tecopa Mining District which produced \$54 million worth of gold, silver, lead, copper and zinc. The high potential mineralized rock units for these five minerals continues into the WSA. The entire WSA also has a moderate potential for geothermal resources. Three hot springs are located within six miles of the WSA. The western third of the WSA has a high potential for geothermal resources.

The eastern quarter of the area has moderate potential for oil and gas resources. Other portions of the WSA also contain moderate potentials for dolomite, silica, sodium and potassium. Along the northern border of the area, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has historically mined sand and gravel for maintenance of the State highway system.

Almost 850 acres of the WSA are encumbered with mining claims which are concentrated in the areas of high mineral potential. Given the history of the Tecopa Mining District, the likelihood for a major discovery and/or valid existing mineral rights is considered to be extremely high.

The inholding owned by the State of California contains moderate potential for dolomite and geothermal resources. State lands are managed with the intent of producing income. Full mineral development of this land would adversely impact wilderness values in the northern portion of the WSA.

The wildlife and vegetative resources within the area are typical of the surrounding desert. The area contains no unusual plants or State or Federally listed threatened or endangered plant or animal species. A plant eligible for State listing may be located within the WSA. However, there is no documented evidence to support this assertion. The WSA is also adjacent to desert bighorn sheep habitat and may receive some use.

The WSA contains an area of high cultural resource sensitivity and represents traditionally used land of the Panamint Shoshone, Southern Ute, River Chemehuevi, Southern Chemehuevi, and Mohave. A portion of the WSA is within the Chicago Valley Wild Horse and Burro Herd Management Area. The entire Herd Management Area supports approximately 30 wild horses and 72 burros.

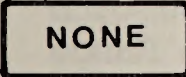
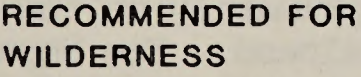


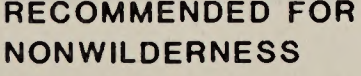
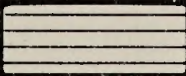

The WSA would be best managed and maintained under nonwilderness and a combination of low and moderate intensity management guidelines as prescribed in the CDCA Plan. The vast mineral and energy wealth of the area could be explored and utilized without sacrifice of desert resources.

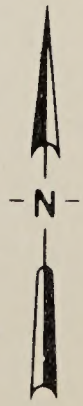




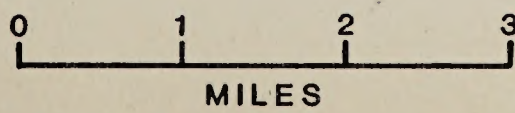
T21  
1/2N  
T21N  
T21N  
T20  
1/2N  
T20N

R7E R8E R8E R9E

- |   |   |   |                            |   |              |
|---|---|---|----------------------------|---|--------------|
|  | NONE  |  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |  | STATE                      |  | PRIVATE      |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |   |                            |   |              |



South Nopah Range  
Proposal  
MAP-1



CDCA-150A  
JUNE, 1988



TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	5,759
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		647
Private		220
Total		<u>6,626</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	5,759
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>5,759</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The WSA has retained its primeval condition and generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable. Ten miles of existing routes of travel, primarily on the western bajada, do detract from the area's naturalness. The Nopah Range Mountains have long been known for their scenic qualities.



2. Solitude: Portions of the WSA provide outstanding opportunities for solitude. The terrain and vegetative variety provide areas where a sense of isolation and seclusion are available. The mountains generally screen the evidences of extensive mining activity just across the southern border of the WSA.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The rugged mountains and bajadas provide opportunities for freedom of movement, varied terrain and vistas in which to hike, backpack, and enjoy nature. The relatively small size of the WSA limits the opportunities for extended primitive recreation experiences.
4. Special Features: The WSA is adjacent to permanent desert bighorn sheep habitat in the northern portion of the Nopah Range Mountains and may receive some infrequent use. The desert bighorn is a BLM sensitive species. The WSA does contain the correct environmental parameters to support habitat for the ivory-spined agave (Agave utahensis var. eborispina), a plant eligible for State listing. However, no specimens have actually been collected from within the WSA. Otherwise, there are no special features. The landforms, ecological diversity, and geological features are not unusual, they are typical of features common throughout the surrounding deserts and mountains.

#### B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 5,759 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush ecosystem. The South Nopah Range WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This ecosystem is represented in other WSAs within the CDCA that are recommended suitable for wilderness designation.



Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,262,150
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,648,346

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of five major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

Population Centers <u>California</u>	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of ten BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation, three of which are located in the State of Nevada. The closest designated wilderness area is Domeland Wilderness, administered by Sequoia National Forest, 120 miles east of the WSA.



### C. Manageability

The South Nopah Range WSA is manageable as wilderness. However, several significant issues have a high potential to complicate manageability of the area for wilderness. Maintenance of the wilderness integrity of the entire WSA into the foreseeable future would be hard to assure.

The WSA and surrounding area has a long and intense history of mineral exploration and development. The entire area contains at least moderate potentials for geothermal resources as well as high or moderate potentials for oil and gas, gold, copper, lead, zinc, silver, dolomite, silica, sodium, potassium, and sand and gravel. Twenty-seven mining claims encumber portions of the WSA. Full-scale development of any of valid mining claims would adversely impact wilderness values in significant portions of the entire WSA. Access requirements for such development would result in similar impacts.

Any development and access requirements for the State inholding would also seriously impair the ability to manage the area for maintenance of its wilderness values.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The South Nopah Range WSA is in the BLM Resting Spring Range Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M data in the wilderness section of the Desert Plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) in 1980 indicated that the boundaries of this WSA barely excluded the Tecopa (Shoshone) Mining District which produced \$54 million worth of gold, silver, lead, copper, and zinc. The mineralized rock units continue into the WSA. The highest potential for lead, silver, and zinc is in the Noonday Dolomite in the western half of the WSA. Copper may occur in Precambrian and Cambrian metasediments east and west of the Noonday outcrops. The carbonate members of Cambrian-age rock formations had been identified by the California Division of Mines and Geology (CDMG), Bulletin 194, as having potential for economic deposits of limestone and dolomite. There was also potential for talc in the western rocky parts of the WSA. Similar units were known to have hosted talc near Tecopa Pass to the south and in other ranges to the south and to the west. The western alluvial parts of the WSA had been classified in 1978 by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) as prospectively valuable for sodium and geothermal energy. Also identified was a potential for borates near Resting Spring, just north of the WSA. The USGS had rated the eastern alluvial area as favorable for oil and gas. The EIS summary stated this may be part of the Overthrust Belt, however, the EIS mistakenly states that there has been production of oil and gas from the Overthrust Belt in



adjacent states. The EIS identifies a potential for radioactive mineralization in the older alluvium at the east end of Emigrant Pass in the northeastern part of the WSA.

The 1980 GRA file and report supports the EIS statements on mineral potential of the WSA. The GRA classified an area in the western half of the WSA as having high potential for the occurrence of lead, silver, zinc, copper, and gold based on past production from the Tecopa Mining District to the south in the same formations. Also, there is a known copper occurrence (and possible past production) within this high potential area. The GRA report classified a large area in the mountainous central part of the WSA as having low potential for the occurrence of limestone and dolomite based on known occurrences. A somewhat smaller area was identified as having low potential for the occurrence of silica (quartzite) resources based on known occurrences. The GRA report and file classified the eastern and western portions (low areas of alluvium) of the WSA as having moderate potential for the occurrence of sodium. A smaller area along the western edge of the WSA was classified as having moderate potential for the occurrence of sodium and potassium based on a 1978 USGS prospectively valuable (PV) classification and past production of sodium borate from a spring five miles to the northeast during the period from 1882 to 1890. The GRA report indicated that all but the eastern edge of the WSA had been classified as a potential geothermal resource area (PGRA) by the USGS. Three hot springs - Tecopa, Chappo, and Resting (three miles, one half of a mile, and six miles from the WSA, respectively) were considered direct evidence for geothermal energy. The western part of the WSA, which is within a volcanic basin, was classified in the GRA as having high potential. The eastern part of the WSA which is within a less favorable area (Cambrian rocks) was rated as having moderate potential for the occurrence of geothermal resources. The eastern part of the WSA was classified as having moderate potential for the occurrence of oil and gas based on the 1978 classification by the USGS as prospectively valuable and its location on the western edge of the Overthrust Belt.

2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should be Considered in the Final Recommendation: No USGS or U.S. Bureau of Mines mineral survey was completed for this WSA because it is recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation. However, a mineral potential assessment of the Stewart Valley Quadrangle, eight miles to the north, was done by the CDMG (1986, Mineral Land Classification of the...Stewart Valley...Quadrangle, Inyo County, California, Open File Report 86-10 SAC).

The Precambrian to Silurian-age rocks, similar to those in the WSA were identified as having hypothetical resources of dolomite, the equivalent of a BLM moderate potential for occurrence classification under the BLM classification system. This is an upgrade of the 1980 GRA low potential classification. In 1987, plans were announced by



AFG Industries, the nation's second largest glass maker, to build a major plant in the Victorville area, about 155 miles from silica deposits in this WSA. The present silica source for AFG is near the Nevada border, about the same distance as the Nopah Range in the WSA. Accordingly, the BLM classification for dolomite and silica is shown as "moderate" on the accompanying mineral potential map.

The 1983 North of Tecopa Pass 7.5 minute quadrangle shows two borrow pits for aggregate extraction not shown on the 15 minute Tecopa quadrangle of 1950. The pits are located next to the Old Spanish Trail Highway (maintained by Inyo County) at the northern edge of the WSA. Therefore, this area is shown on the accompanying map as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of sand and gravel resources.

Unpatented lode and placer mining claims are located within the southern portion of the WSA. Unpatented mining claims in the WSA are summarized in the following table, taken from BLM mineral records dated December, 1987.

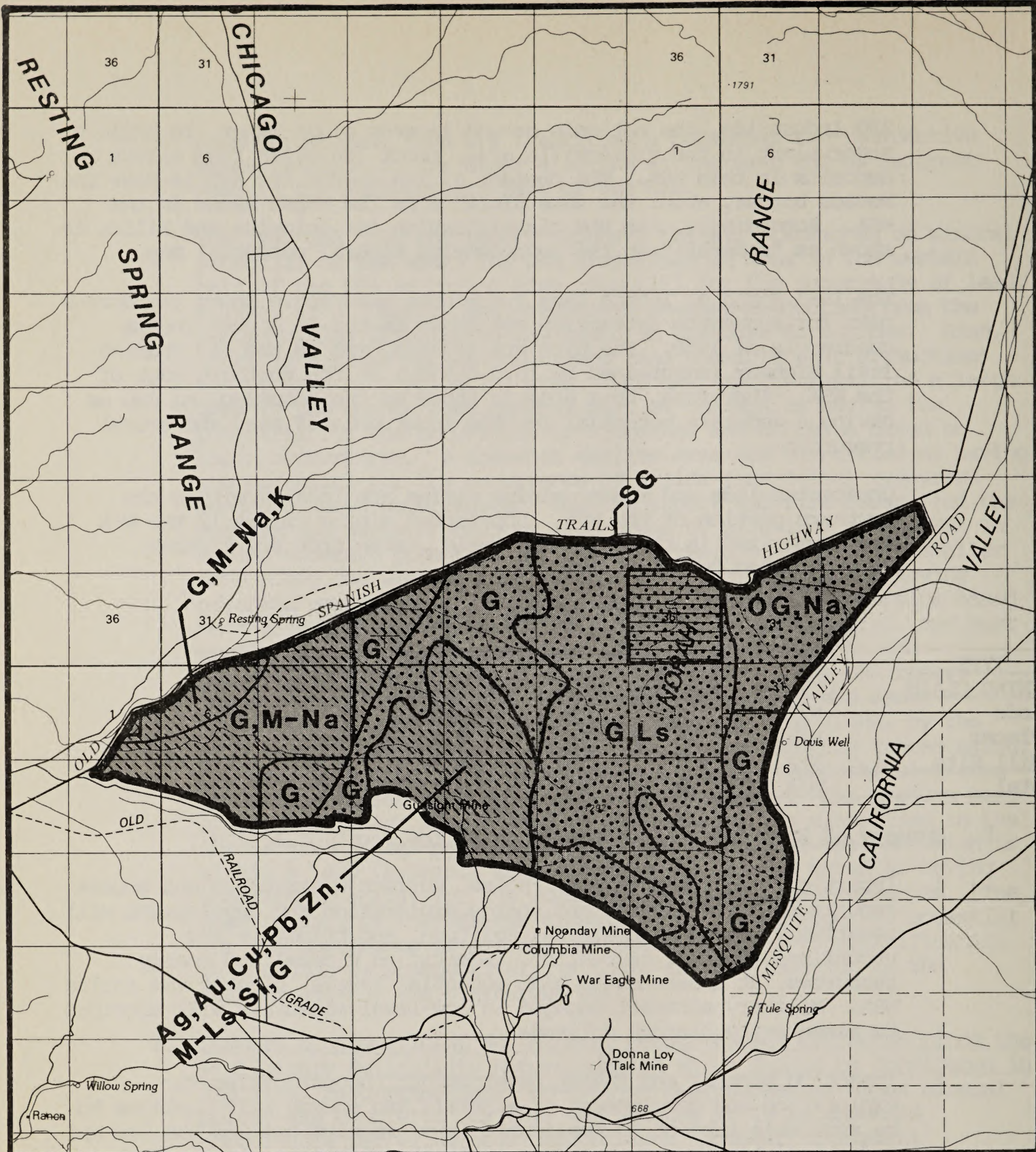
Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
MINING CLAIM						
Lode	N/A	12	12	N/A	240	240
Placer	N/A	15	15	N/A	600	600
Mill Site	N/A	0	0	N/A	0	0
Total	N/A	27	27	N/A	840	840

#### E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Noise, surface disturbance and access requirements for mineral and energy exploration and development will negatively impact naturalness, solitude, and primitive and unconfined types of recreation. Identified mineral and energy resources, at moderate and high potential levels, blanket the entire WSA. Military aircraft engaged in low-level maneuvers will continue to momentarily disrupt solitude.
2. Impact on Mineral and Energy Development: Opportunities for exploration and development of minerals and energy will continue to be available subject to applicable laws, regulations and the low and moderate intensity management guidelines established in the CDCA Plan. Caltrans will be able to fully develop the sand and gravel reserves for use in maintenance of the highways.





- NONE** Recommended for Wilderness
- Recommended for Non Wilderness
- Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness
- Split Estate
- State
- Private

- Explanation**
- High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
  - Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
  - M** Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area
  - H** High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area

- Commodity Symbols**
- Ag** Silver    **Au** Gold
  - Cu** Copper    **Pb** Lead
  - Zn** Zinc    **Si** Silica
  - Na** Sodium
  - K** Potassium
  - G** Geothermal
  - SG** Sand & Gravel
  - Ls** Limestone/Dolomite



3. Impact on Native American Concerns and Cultural Resource Values: These sensitive resources will continue to receive protection by applicable laws and regulations. The low intensity land use prescription for a portion of the WSA will further reduce the likelihood for adverse impacts to known cultural sites. Opportunities will to be available for traditional access to Native American collection sites.
4. Impact on Potential Desert Bighorn Sheep and Sensitive Plant Habitat: Without the development of additional waters, there is little likelihood that sheep will ever inhabit the WSA on a permanent basis. When, and if the ivory-spined agave is formally State listed, surveys will be conducted to locate the plant and then appropriate measures taken to protect the habitat.
5. Impact on Management of Wild Horses and Burros: Opportunities will continue to be available for the use of mechanized equipment to control population numbers within the carrying capacity of the land.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: Most comments addressed evidence of mining and access roads. A few referred to wilderness qualities.
2. Study Phase: Nine comments were received on this WSA. Six opposed and three favored further study for this area. Those letters opposing wilderness stated that there is evidence of extensive past and present mining activity in this area, along with numerous access roads. The area was said to be dotted with talc mines. Respondents listed several factors which they believe interfere with wilderness quality: military bases several miles distant, the town of Tecopa, off-highway vehicle use, the noise from trucks on Hwy 127, and the sound of low-level flyovers by aircraft from George Air Force Base. They stated that there was little opportunity for solitude of primitive recreation in the presence of the above detractions. Recreationists wanted the area open for camping by recreationists using the Dumont Dunes.



Wilderness proponents mentioned scenic quality and protection of wildlife. One respondent proposed consolidation this WSA with the Nopah Mountains, Resting Springs Range, Greenwater Range and Valley, and Eagle Mountain into one vast wilderness area with both geologic and physiographic integrity. The area was said to provide outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: Most comments were general in nature, with few specific references to this WSA. The Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, and the Wilderness Society recommended wilderness designation for this area. This position was in agreement with the Protection Alternative. Many individuals wrote comments supporting this recommendation. In contrast, the National Outdoor Coalition (NOC), a coalition of mining, rockhounding, and off-highway vehicle groups, distributed its own alternative map. It showed a multiple use designation of Class M, medium use, for this area. This recommendation was in agreement with the Use, the Balanced, and the No Action Alternatives. This position was supported by a large number of clubs and individuals through letters and coupons. The County of Inyo opposed further wilderness study for WSA 150A and favored the Use Alternative, of Class M, this area. The County stated that the Bureau had not considered mineral resources or the arable lands in the Chicago Valley in writing the Draft Plan.
4. Proposed Plan: The Proposed Plan's recommendation of Class M for this area was opposed by conservationists, most of whom wanted a wilderness designation. NOC and other wilderness opponents approved.



# **Pahrump Valley**

*CDCA 154*







## PAHRUMP VALLEY WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-154)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA ---

36,058 acres

The Pahrump Valley WSA is located in San Bernardino and Inyo Counties within the northeastern portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The community of Tecopa is 25 miles to the west. The WSA includes 34,289 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and 1,769 acres owned by the State of California (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern and eastern boundary of the WSA is the "Old Traction Road." This road was originally built to haul borax from mines in Death Valley. The southern boundary follows the Jupiter Mine access road and then goes north for approximately one mile before it turns due west, following no specific topographic features. The western boundary coincides with an access road for approximately three miles before it angles northeasterly along the bottom of a gravel wash.

The WSA includes a northern portion of the Kingston Range and portions of California, Mesquite, and Pahrump Valleys. The area contains approximately 55% hills, 30% alluvial fans, 8% dissected fans, 5% highly dissected fans, and 2% pediments. The Kingston Range is rugged, with many canyons. The east- and north-facing bajadas of the range have moderate slopes, with many winding washes. Vegetation is composed of grasses, yucca, cacti, Joshua trees, and mixed desert shrub species. The valleys are predominately desert shrubs.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the CDCA Plan; protection, use, balanced and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0	acres recommended for wilderness
34,289	acres recommended for nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for the Pahrump Valley WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. Under this recommendation, future activities in the area will be controlled by moderate intensity management as prescribed in the CDCA Plan. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.



The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan.

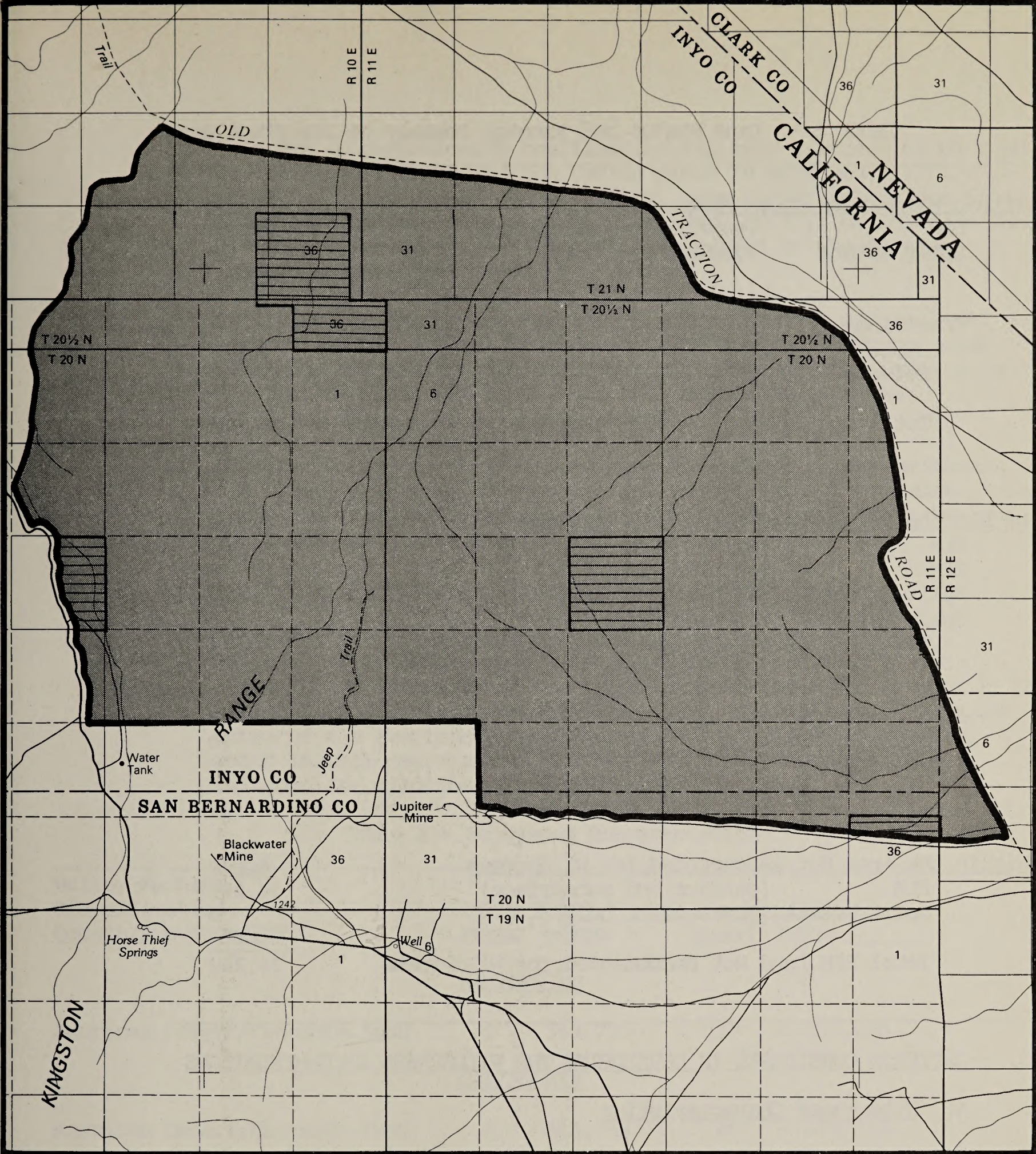
The ability to explore and develop the area's mineral and energy reserves is of greater significance than the value of the area as wilderness. Scenic qualities are considered second-rate primarily because of lack of color and line contrasts. Designation of the area as wilderness would not contribute any additional unique or distinct features to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Other WSAs in the Californian Desert that are recommended suitable offer a much more extensive and diverse representation of desert wilderness values. There are approximately 16 miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.

The Pahrump Valley WSA and surrounding area has long been recognized for its known and potential mineral and energy values. The northeast part of the WSA has moderate potential for the occurrence of oil and gas. Moderate potential zones for the occurrence of limestone/dolomite and silica resources are scattered throughout the entire area. An area in the southern part of the WSA has moderate potentials for the occurrence of silver, lead, zinc, and copper. Although the WSA itself contains no historic mines, other portions of the Kingston Range just across the southern border have had past producing mines.

The entire area is rather nondescript. Opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation are available but not outstanding. The wildlife and vegetative resources within the area are typical of the surrounding desert. The area contains no unusual plants or State or Federally listed threatened or endangered plant or animal species. The western two thirds of the WSA lies within the Horsethief Springs Grazing Allotment. A pipeline, windmill, and several troughs are located within the south-central portion of the area. The area contains no significant cultural resource values or Native American concerns.

The WSA would be best managed and maintained under nonwilderness and moderate intensity management guidelines as prescribed in the CDCA Plan. The mineral wealth of the area could be fully developed without the sacrifice of desert resources.





NONE

RECOMMENDED FOR  
WILDERNESS

RECOMMENDED FOR  
NONWILDERNESS

LAND OUTSIDE WSA  
RECOMMENDED FOR  
WILDERNESS

SPLIT ESTATE

STATE

PRIVATE

SPLIT ESTATE

STATE

PRIVATE

Pahrump Valley  
Proposal  
MAP-1

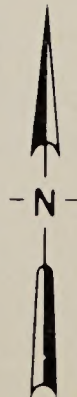
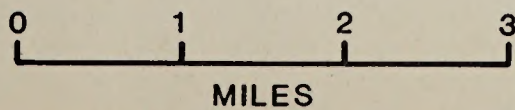




TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	34,289
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		1,769
Private		0
Total		<u>36,058</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	<u>0</u>
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	34,289
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>34,289</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The WSA is characterized by mountains, enclosed valleys, and bajadas that are essentially void of human intrusions. Several four-wheel drive routes, grandfathered range improvements, and mining scars impact the interior of the WSA.
2. Solitude: Opportunities for solitude are available. The mountains and intimate canyons would allow visitors to experience the feeling of isolation. On the bajadas, lack of vegetative screening and topographic diversity would reduce opportunities.



This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The rugged mountains and canyons lend themselves to such activities as backpacking, peak climbing, day hiking, and nature study. However, the large number of existing routes of travel and the grandfathered range improvements do have a limiting affect.
4. Special Features: There are no special features. The landforms, ecological diversity, and geological features are not unusual, they are typical of features common throughout the surrounding deserts and mountains.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: The Pahrump Valley WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The WSA contains 34,289 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush (Larrea) ecosystem, which is well represented in other WSAs that are recommended suitable for wilderness designation in the CDCA.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification <u>Domain/Province/PNV</u>	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,233,620
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,619,816

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of three major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.



Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

<u>Population Centers</u>	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of nine BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation, three of which are located in the state of Nevada. The closest designated wilderness area is Joshua Tree Wilderness, administered by Joshua Tree National Monument, 120 miles south of the WSA.

C. Manageability

The Pahrump Valley WSA is manageable as wilderness. However, several significant issues have a high potential to complicate manageability of the area for wilderness.

The WSA and its surrounding area has a long and intense history of mineral exploration and development. The area contains known energy and mineral values. Full-scale development of any of the valid mining claims has a high potential to impact wilderness values in significant portions of the entire WSA. Access requirements for such development would result in similar impacts.

The WSA also contains inholdings owned by the State of California, portions of which contain identified mineral potentials. These lands are managed to produce income for the State. Any mineral use, development, and associated access requirements would very likely not be compatible with wilderness values.

The grandfathered range improvements are located in the central portion of the WSA. Such improvements include a windmill, pipeline, and troughs. Due to the location and placement of these facilities, necessary monthly access and maintenance requirements may pose some threats to the marginal wilderness values in the area.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.



#### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The Pahrump Valley WSA (CDCA-154) is located in the BLM Kingston Range Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M data in the wilderness portion of the Desert Plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) indicated in 1980 that mineral resource data for this WSA had not been fully analyzed, integrated, and interpreted. However, it did state that this WSA had possible potential for the occurrence of talc in the southern part and for sodium, oil, and gas along the northern and eastern edges. The Vulcan Mine, located just adjacent to the southern margin of the WSA, was an active talc mine. On December 12, 1979, six unpatented mining claims were known to be recorded with the BLM in the WSA.

The 1980 GRA files indicated high potential for the occurrence of talc in the southern part of the WSA. This was based on a favorable geologic environment extending from past producers south of the WSA. The GRA files also showed two moderate potential zones for the occurrence of limestone/dolomite resources in the northeastern part of the WSA based on known occurrences. An area in the southern part of the WSA was classified as having moderate potential for the occurrence of silver, lead, zinc, and copper based on several known occurrences, reported showings (at the Jupiter Mine about one mile south of the WSA), anomalous geochemical values, and minor tonal anomalies in association with favorable rock types (copper stains and quartz veins in dolomite of the Noonday and Johnnie formations). The northeastern part of the WSA was identified as having moderate potential for the occurrence of oil and gas based on the 1978 U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) classification as "prospectively valuable" within the overthrust belt.

2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which should be Considered in the Final Recommendation: No USGS or U.S. Bureau of Mines mineral survey was completed for this WSA because it is recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation. New data is provided by the California Division of Mines and Geology (CDMG) Open File Report 85-151A Mineral Land Classification of the Northern Portion of the Kingman 1x2 degree quadrangle... (1987). This report shows that the talc zones stop short of the southern boundary of the WSA. Therefore, the potential for the occurrence of talc in the WSA is considered low using the BLM mineral classification system. The boundary of the moderate potential zone for silver, lead, zinc, and copper, in the southern part of the WSA is changed from the 1980 GRA boundary to the moderate potential boundary defined by the CDMG. In addition, the moderate potential zone for the occurrence of copper in the western part of the WSA has also been redesigned to conform to the CDMG boundary. The CDMG report also shows moderate potential zones (under the BLM mineral resource classification system) for the occurrence of limestone/dolomite and silica resources scattered across the WSA.



The Gold Eagle Mining Co. filed a plan of operations (CA MC 55572) for gold exploration in 1984 for exploration trenching in the northwest part of the WSA.

Unpatented mining claims in the WSA are summarized in the following table taken from BLM mineral records dated December, 1987.

Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
MINING CLAIM						
Lode	N/A	4	4	N/A	80	80
Placer	N/A	3	3	N/A	120	120
Mill Site	N/A	0	0	N/A	0	0
Total	N/A	7	7	N/A	200	200

E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Noise, surface disturbance and access requirements for mineral and energy exploration and development will negatively impact naturalness, solitude, and primitive and unconfined types of recreation. Identified mineral and energy potentials are spread throughout the entire WSA. Any additional range improvements for livestock management will also adversely impact wilderness values.
2. Impact on Mineral and Energy Exploration and Development: Opportunities for exploration and development of minerals and energy will continue to be available subject to applicable laws, regulations and the moderate intensity management guidelines established in the CDCA Plan.
3. Impact on Livestock Grazing: Consistent with CDCA Plan guidelines, opportunities will continue to be available for development and maintenance of range improvements for livestock management.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

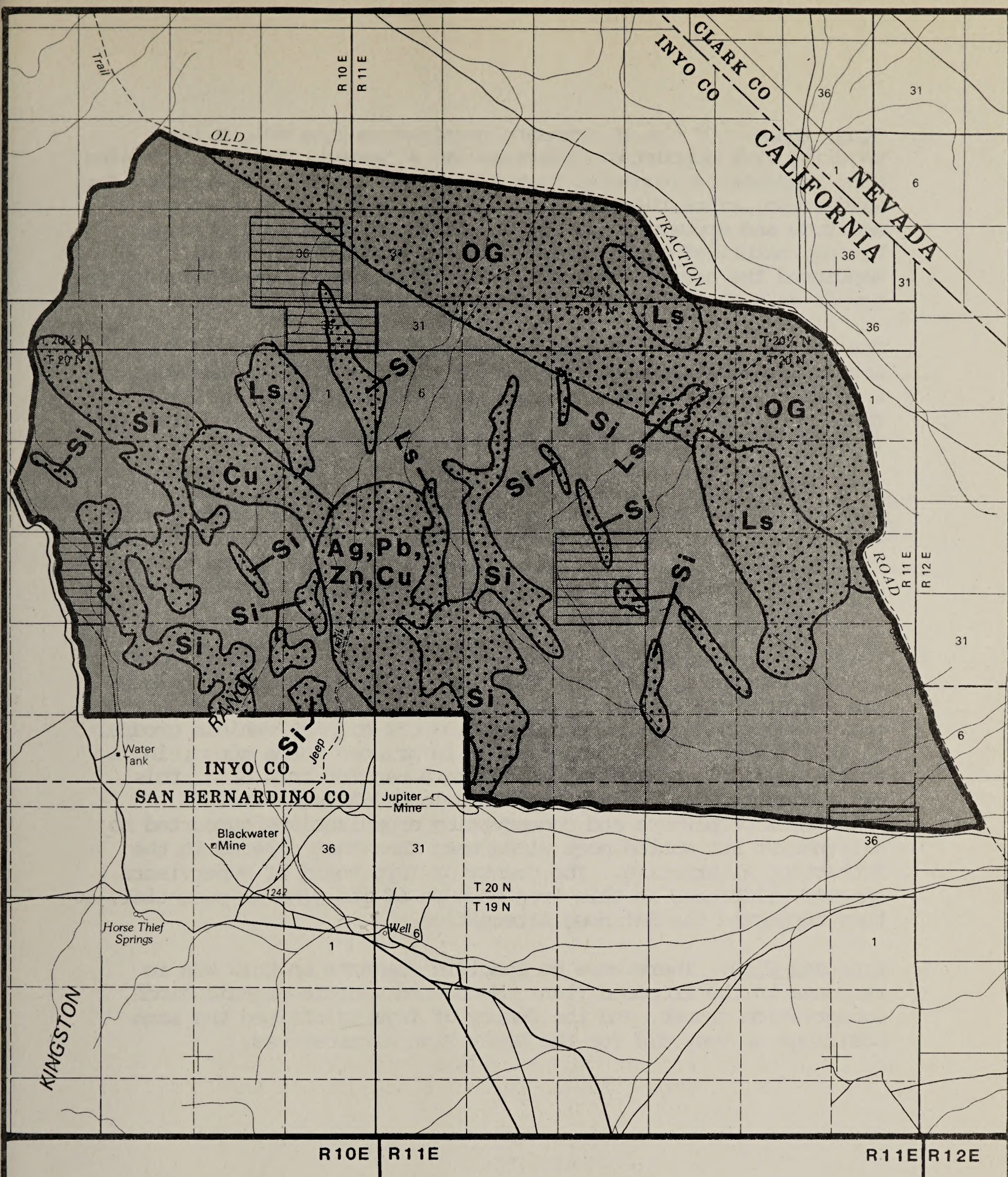
No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: Some comments listed areas which were viewed as unsuitable for wilderness because of roads and mining activities. Others stated that large portions of the area fulfilled the 2(c) criteria of the Wilderness Act and were eligible for further study.





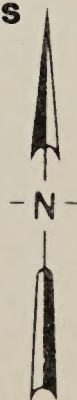
- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| <b>NONE</b> | Recommended for Wilderness                  |
|             | Recommended for Non Wilderness              |
|             | Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness |
|             | Split Estate                                |
|             | State                                       |
|             | Private                                     |

### Explanation

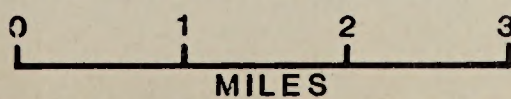
- |          |  |
|----------|--|
|          | High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals     |
|          | Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals |
| <b>M</b> | Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area       |
| <b>H</b> | High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area       |

### Commodity Symbols

- |           |                    |
|-----------|--------------------|
| <b>Ag</b> | Silver             |
| <b>Cu</b> | Copper             |
| <b>Ls</b> | Limestone/Dolomite |
| <b>OG</b> | Oil & Gas          |
| <b>Pb</b> | Lead               |
| <b>Si</b> | Silicon            |
| <b>Zn</b> | Zinc               |



## Pahrump Valley Mineral Resource Potential



MAP-2  
CDCA-154



2. Study Phase: Of the 26 comments received on this WSA, a large majority (22) supported wilderness for a large portion of this area. Many respondents requested that this WSA be given consideration for wilderness, since they thought it fulfilled the requirements for solitude and opportunities for primitive recreation, including hiking, nature study, horseback riding, and hunting. Some mentioned the area's contiguity with large, public land holdings in Nevada as a factor adding to the area's wilderness potential.

The letters opposing wilderness designation were concerned about access and mineral production. Talc mining and its access roads were discussed. Grazing concerns were also noted. Mine sites, roads, and motorized vehicle activity were mentioned as detracting from the area's wilderness potential.

Four comments were received in response to the Public Input Workbook. Two requested a change in the WSA boundaries to permit continued mining. One opposed wilderness since it would interfere with access for scientific and ecological studies. A fourth comment urged that the area receive wilderness classification to protect its ecological values.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: There were few comments specific to WSA 154 in response to the Draft Plan Alternatives. However, this WSA was one of those opposed by the National Outdoor Coalition, a coalition of mining, rockhounding, and off-highway vehicle groups. A large number of club members sent in printed forms supporting a multiple use classification of moderate use for this area; this classification was proposed by the Balanced Alternative. Wilderness proponents and conservation organizations supported no alternative but wanted more wilderness than that offered in the Protection Alternative. The County of Inyo Board of Supervisors opposed wilderness in this area because of its mineral potential, so they supported the Balanced Alternative.
4. Proposed Plan: There were no specific comments on this WSA in response to the Proposed Plan. Motorized vehicle organizations, conservation groups, and the County of Inyo maintained the same positions as they did for the Draft Plan Alternatives.



# Owlshead Mountains

*CDCA 156*







## OWLSHEAD MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-156)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA --- 132,908 acres

The Owlshead Mountains WSA is located along the north San Bernardino County line within the north central portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The WSA is approximately 60 miles north of Barstow and is accessible from Interstate Highway 15 via State Highway 127 and Harry Wade Road. The WSA includes 125,339 acres of public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and 7,569 acres owned by the State of California (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA is bounded to the east and north by administratively endorsed wilderness in Death Valley National Monument (DVMN). The northern border is the San Bernardino-Inyo County line. The western boundary is the China Lake Naval Weapons Center and private land. The southern boundary is the National Training Center at the Fort Irwin Military Reservation. The southeastern boundary consists of topographic lines and portions of access roads to a microwave facility and the Black Magic Mines.

The area is characterized by rugged mountains which border two interior valleys, each of which contains a dry lake. Elevations range from 1,695 feet to 4,988 feet. The mountains take the form of three north-south trending ranges that converge to the north of the WSA. The ranges on the east and west appear metamorphic in nature, while the middle range shows a volcanic influence. Three plant assemblages are represented in the area; the Mojave creosote bush scrub which is located on alluvial slopes, the blackbush scrub which is located in similar areas, and the Mojave saltbush scrub which is found primarily around dry lake beds.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE --- 129,319 acres recommended for wilderness 3,427 BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

Partial-wilderness (approximately 97% suitable) is the recommendation for the Owlshead Mountains WSA. The other 3,427 acres in this WSA recommended nonsuitable are released for uses other than wilderness. In addition to the Federal acreage recommended for wilderness, BLM recommends that 7,407 acres of State land be acquired through exchange or purchase and designated as wilderness. With acquisition of these inholdings, a total of 129,319 acres are recommended for wilderness. Appendix 1 lists all inholdings and provides additional information on their acquisition. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.



The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan.

Only the extreme southeast portion of the WSA is not recommended for designation as wilderness. This area has mining scars and due to its configuration, a lack of opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. Land uses in the nonsuitable portion of the WSA will be controlled by low intensity management guidelines as prescribed in the CDCA Plan.

The suitable portion of the WSA illustrates wilderness character that exemplifies the criteria established in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964. The WSA is characterized by rugged mountains and intrusion-free basins containing dry lake beds. The opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation, as well as the WSA's naturalness are outstanding to the point of far outweighing alternative uses of the area.

The WSA is pristine in character. A maintained dirt road to a microwave facility is the only road that penetrates into the WSA. The facility and access road are cherrystemmed, but do not detract from the primeval character of the WSA. Because wilderness values are so significant, the suitability recommendation will preclude any further vehicular use of approximately 30 miles of primitive access routes of travel.

The topography is varied and scenic, providing outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation. Diversity of land forms and the area's large size combine to create seemingly unlimited areas of isolation and seclusion throughout the entire WSA. Opportunities include physically challenging activities such as backpacking, peak climbing in the Owlshead Mountains, nature studying, and photography, especially in and around Owl and Lost dry lakes and Quail Spring.

Significant scenic values within the WSA include stark, white, dry lake beds with orange, tan, and gray jagged mountains forming a backdrop. In addition, a spectacular vista of the Amargosa River drainage and Death Valley, provides outstanding opportunities for photography.

Currently the WSA receives low recreational use including small game hunting, rockhounding, day hiking and nature study. The primary use is associated with rockhounding and the search for the Owlshead sagenite agate, banded agate and nodules. Vehicle access to some of the traditional rock collection areas will be lost as a result of wilderness designation. However, the cherrystemmed road to the microwave facility makes most of the collection sites within walking distance.

The west-central portion of the WSA is a historic collection site for Native Americans. Wilderness designation will necessitate foot access from the cherrystemmed road. Very little of the Owlshead Mountains have been inventoried to locate cultural resource sites, and consequently few sites are known. The Owl Dry Lake area appears to be very sensitive with identified lithic quarry sites.



Two BLM sensitive species, the desert bighorn sheep and desert tortoise, are known to be present. The western one quarter of the WSA is within the Slate Range Wild Burro Herd Management Area. Wilderness designation may somewhat complicate herd management. Quail Spring, which is located in the southern portion of the WSA, is particularly noted for its riparian habitat and variety of avifauna. Wild burros also water at the spring.

The majority of the suitable portion has no identified mineral values. However, portions do have a high potential for iron and manganese and moderate potentials for copper, gold, lead, silver, zeolites and zinc (See Map 2). Currently there are 24 mining claims in the suitable portion of the WSA. However, there are no existing plans of operation. Historically, active mines are not included within the WSA boundaries and the nearby scars of mineral exploration are excluded from the recommended suitable portion of the WSA.

Few, if any, conflicts exist between wilderness and other known resources values in the recommended suitable portion of the Owlshhead Mountains WSA. The existing wilderness values far exceed potential mineral values. Designation of the area as wilderness will present no known manageability issues and will compliment current management in the adjacent Death Valley National Monument.







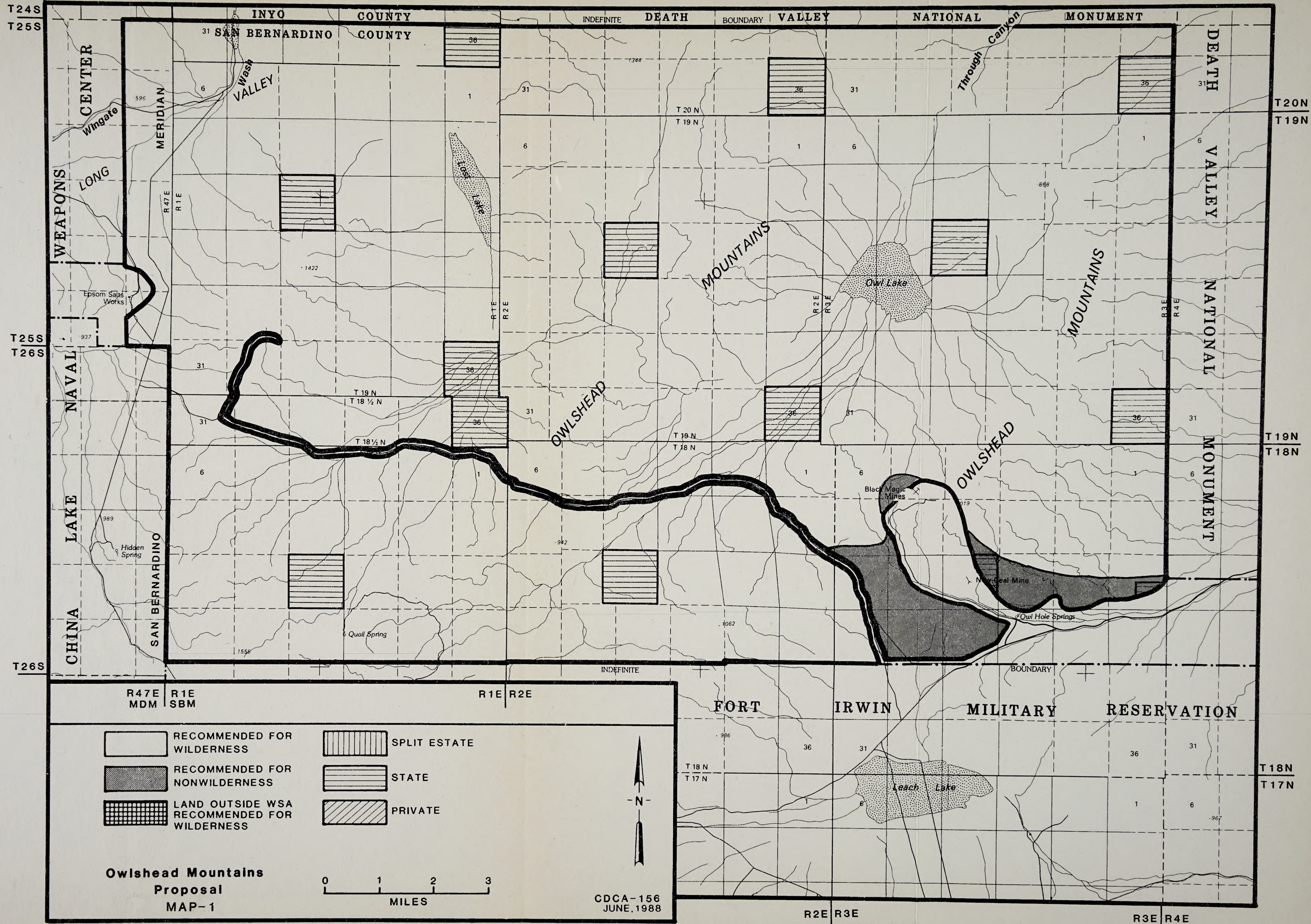








TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	125,339
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		7,569
Private		0
Total		<u>132,908</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	121,912
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
		<u>0</u>
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		121,912
Inholdings <sup>1</sup>		
State		7,407
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	3,427
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>3,427</u>

---

<sup>1</sup>Appendix 1 is a detailed description of inholdings and split estate tracts included within the study. For purposes of this report, split estate lands are defined only as those lands with Federal surface and non Federal subsurface (minerals). Lands that have Federal minerals but non Federal surface should be classified in this report by the owner of the surface estate.



3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The area recommended suitable for wilderness is largely undisturbed by man and affected primarily by the forces of nature. The cherry-stemmed microwave facility and access road penetrate the area, but do not noticeably detract from the primeval character of the land due to its large size and diversity of landforms.

The nonsuitable portion of the WSA has similar values but does contain some evidence of previous mining activity.

2. Solitude: The suitable portion of the Owlhead Mountains WSA provides visitors with outstanding opportunities for solitude. Diversity of landforms and large size combine to create areas of isolation and seclusion both in the mountains and in the valleys.

The majority of the area that is recommended nonsuitable has limited opportunities for solitude because of its size and narrow configuration.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The suitable area allows freedom of unconfined movement. The adjacent administratively endorsed wilderness in DVNM and the unconfined character of the landscape further enhance these opportunities.

Opportunities in the nonsuitable portion are reduced because of surrounding roads.

4. Special Features: The suitable portion of the WSA has a complete absence of man's evidence. Scenic views within the WSA are breathtaking. In addition, the vista of the Amargosa River drainage and Death Valley is spectacular.

The western one quarter of the WSA is within the Slate Range Wild Burro Herd Management Area (HMA). Currently burros are known to rely on the water at Quail Spring which is not within the HMA.

The desert bighorn sheep utilizes the far eastern portion of the WSA on a transient basis. The desert tortoise is present within the WSA in low densities, ranging from zero to twenty animals per square mile. The tortoise is under status review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for possible listing as a threatened or endangered species.



B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: The WSA contains 125,339 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush ecosystem. Although this ecosystem is currently well represented in the NWPS, the spectacular scenery and the distant vistas of the Amargosa River drainage and Death Valley are unparalleled anywhere within the California Desert.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,142,570
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,528,766

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of four major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreages of designated areas and other BLM study areas within five hours of the population centers.

Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of seven BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness area is Domeland Wilderness, administered by the Sequoia National Forest, 80 miles west of the WSA.



### C. Manageability

The recommended suitable portion of the Owlshead Mountains WSA is manageable as wilderness with no foreseen complications. Known areas of mineral production have been excluded and existing off-highway vehicle use is light. Maintaining the integrity of the boundaries will require minimal effort because of the adjacent military reservations and administratively endorsed wilderness in DVNM. The small portion in the southeast corner of the WSA that has evidence of previous mining activity and limited opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation was not recommended suitable.

Access within the WSA is good because of the cherrystemmed road to the microwave facility. This access road does not degrade the integrity of the area but provides several valuable assets to management of the area as wilderness. First, it allows Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company needed access to their microwave facility; second, it allows opportunities for all segments of the population to gain access to the interior of the wilderness without degrading the area's integrity; and third, it allows law enforcement patrol access to insure wilderness integrity and compliance with wilderness management policy by users.

Acquisition and designation of the State of California lands is important for management of the entire area as a unit. This will assure: 1) continuity of management philosophy and style, and 2) protection of the area's naturalness and important wilderness opportunities such as primitive and unconfined recreation and solitude.

The western quarter of the WSA is within the Slate Herd Management Area for wild burros. Population control measures will have to be taken if the population increases beyond management levels and threatens the riparian habitat at Quail Spring. Depending upon the size and extent of removals, vehicle restrictions may limit some of the options available for control measures.

Portions of the WSA have a high potential for iron and manganese and moderate potentials for copper, gold, lead, silver, zeolites and zinc. There are no current plans of operation for exploration or development within the WSA. However, if any valid claims are developed, site specific impacts on wilderness values will occur causing management problems for the WSA.

Management of the nonsuitable portion of the WSA as wilderness would be more complicated and difficult. The small size and configuration of this portion of the WSA seriously reduces the possibilities for solitude

and opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation. The natural qualities of the nonsuitable portion have been reduced due to the surface disturbances from historic mining activities.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.



#### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The Owlshead Mountains WSA (CDCA-156) is located in the BLM Owlshead Mountains Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M data in the wilderness portion of the Desert Plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) indicated in 1980 that the same geologic environment in the New Deal and Black Magic manganese mines also extends into the southeastern part of the WSA. This area was rated as having high potential for the occurrence of manganese mineralization. The area around Quail Spring in the southwestern portion of the WSA was given a speculative potential for gold, silver and copper based on reported occurrences of these commodities associated with ten mining claims. The areas of older alluvium at the flanks of the mountains, and gamma-ray uranium and thorium anomalies, were assessed as having speculative potential for uranium/thorium. Most of the western and southern parts of the WSA were ranked as having "medium to speculative " potential for the occurrence of oil and gas.

The draft 1980 Owlshead Mountains GRA report stated that through 1950, the New Deal and Black Magic mines produced more than 15,300 tons of ore averaging 25-45% manganese. The New Deal Mine was the most productive manganese property in San Bernardino County with production in both 1914-1918 and 1941-1946 (Wright, et al., 1953, Mines and Mineral Deposits of San Bernardino County, California, California Division of Mines and Geology, Volume 49, page 119).

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) had classified the areas surrounding Lost Lake and Owl Lake as prospectively valuable in 1978 for sodium compounds, and three areas in WSA as prospectively valuable for oil and gas. The Owlshead GRA overlays classified these areas as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of these resources.

2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should be Considered in the Final Recommendation: USGS and the U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) had conducted a mineral survey of the portion of the WSA recommended suitable for wilderness designation in 1983. In 1984, they released their joint open file report OFR 84-755. Significant new data for this and other deposits are provided in USGS OFR 84-755. In the report, iron reserves at the Ellie Mine were estimated at ten million tons, and an additional ten million tons of ore was inferred to extend into the WSA. The report concluded that an area of about six square miles in the southeast part of the WSA has high potential for the occurrence of both iron and manganese resources based on favorable geology surrounding past producers. The Ellie iron Mine, about one third of a mile outside of the WSA produced about 7,000 tons of ore in 1981 and 1982 under a BLM plan of operations. Because the Tertiary sedimentary rocks in the area are unfavorable as hosts for manganese deposits, the area classified by BLM in the 1980 G-E-M assessment as "high potential" for manganese south and



west of the non-WSA cherrystem, should be deleted. The open file report indicates a moderate potential area for lead, zinc, copper and silver southwest of Lost Lake and a moderate potential area for the occurrence of gold, silver and copper near the southwest corner of the WSA (refer to accompanying mineral potential map).

The map in OFR 84-755 upgraded the area around Quail Spring from BLM's 1980 "speculative" potential to moderate potential for the occurrence of gold, silver and copper. This reclassification was based on more detailed field examination by the USGS and BOM. Based on the USGS/BOM report, the portion of the area classified by the BLM in 1980 as having moderate potential of the occurrence of oil and gas, and sodium minerals should be deleted because the area does not contain favorable source beds for these resources. New unpublished information from the California Division of Mines and Geology (from comments on OFR 84-755) indicates two areas with moderate potential for the occurrence of zeolites in the south-central portion of the WSA, and along a Tertiary volcanic unit in the north central portion of the WSA.

Unpatented mining claims in the WSA are summarized in the following table taken from BLM records dated December, 1987.

Table 4 Mining Claims

TYPE MINING CLAIM	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
Lode	4	0	4	80	0	80
Placer	19	0	19	760	0	760
Mill Site	1	0	1	5	0	5
Total	24	0	24	845	0	845

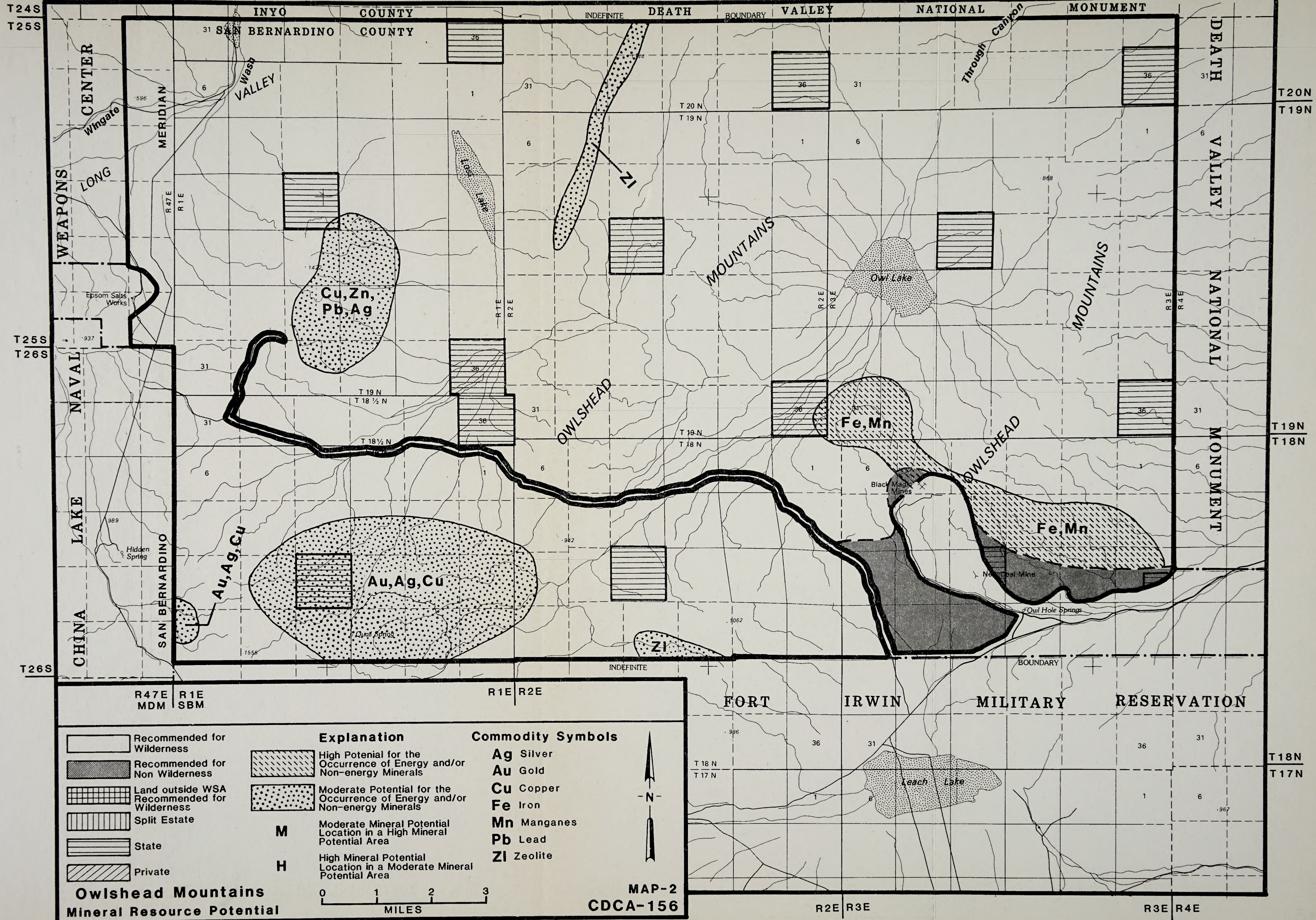
E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Existing high quality wilderness values will be maintained in the portion of the WSA that is recommended suitable. Access to and development of any valid existing mineral rights will, however, adversely impact wilderness values.

In the portion of the WSA not recommended as suitable, naturalness, opportunities for solitude and opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation will gradually decline over the long-term as a result of mineral exploration and development and the cumulative effect of this use.

2. Impact on Rockhounding: Vehicle access to many traditional use areas will no longer be available. However, most of these areas are within walking distance from the cherrystemmed road.











3. Impact on Bighorn Sheep and Desert Tortoise Habitat: Potential impacts on habitat will be minimized in virtually the entire WSA because of the elimination of vehicle and surface disturbances. Opportunities for development of additional water sources for sheep will be available but may be constrained by vehicle use restrictions.
4. Impact on Wild Burros: Within the suitable portions of the WSA, opportunities for management and control of wild burro populations will be available but may be constrained by vehicle use restrictions.
5. Impact on Native American Concerns: Vehicle access to traditional collection sites will no longer be available. Users will have to access sites on foot from the cherrystemmed road to the microwave installation.
6. Impact on Locatable Minerals: Opportunities for exploration and development of locatable minerals will be eliminated or severely contained within the suitable portion of the WSA. Development of any valid existing rights will be allowed and subject to the undue and unnecessary clause of the 43 CFR 3809 regulations. Development within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA will be allowed to continue subject existing regulations and guidelines defined in the CDCA Plan.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: Many comments expressed interest in motorized recreation in the area for camping and rockhounding. Other comments supported the findings. No changes were made as a direct result of the comments.
2. Study Phase: Of 33 comments received, 15 opposed wilderness designation. Many opponents noted sights and sounds as detracting from the area's wilderness potential. These included mining activity, roads, campsites, wreckage of aerial targets, fences, pipelines, signs, structures, and low-flying aircraft. One



individual felt the area was too barren, just not worthy of wilderness status. Another discussed the lack of water and distance from the nearest access road as making primitive recreation in this area impractical.

Mineral potential, specifically in the Owlshead Mountains, was commonly noted. Several letters were received from rockhounds who were concerned that limiting access would cut off Owl Hole Spring and Owlshead Mountains, both popular rockhound areas. These sites contain sagenite agate, geodes, nodules, agates, manganese, golden sagenite, quartz, opals, and chalcedony.

The letters favoring wilderness designation often mentioned the area's contiguity to Death Valley National Monument as a factor heightening wilderness management potential. The Quail Spring riparian habitat was one of several unique ecosystems discussed. The isolation of Owl Dry Lake and the Black Magic Mine was said to be conducive to protection of unique flora and fauna in those areas. One respondent pointed out the possibility of preserving the entire valleys of two remote dry lakebeds without road access. Educational, geologic, historic, and scenic qualities were mentioned. Several boundary alterations were suggested. One wished to remove a cherry-stemmed microwave tower. Another suggested including the area south of the microwave station in the suitable area.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: Most of the comments on the Draft Plan Alternatives treated the WSA as part of the total wilderness system of the CDCA; only a few addressed this WSA specifically. The National Outdoor Coalition (NOC), a coalition of mining, rockhounding, and off-road vehicle groups, recommended that this area be designated nonsuitable for wilderness status, preferring that it be mostly Class "M" (moderate use). A large number of club members sent in printed coupons, petitions, and letters supporting this position. Conservation-oriented groups advocated wilderness designation for the entire WSA.

Two military bases were concerned about access through this WSA. The Naval Weapons Center at China Lake requested that access to the Mojave "B" Range from the east be permitted for emergency vehicles. The National Training Center at Fort Irwin wished to control access to a scenic road in the southern portion of the WSA which dips into the northern part of Fort Irwin in an area designated as a bombing range. On the other hand, rockhounds wanted to keep roads open.

4. Proposed Plan: Comments from military bases and the general public repeated the same themes described for the Plan Alternatives.

No comments were received from local governments.



APPENDIX 1  
ESTIMATED COSTS OF ACQUISITION OF NON-FEDERAL HOLDINGS WITHIN  
AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR DESIGNATION  
OWLSHEAD MOUNTAINS WSA (CDCA-156)

PARCEL No.	LEGAL DESCRIPTION				TOTAL ACREAGE	NUMBER OF OWNERS	TYPE OF OWNERSHIP BY ESTATE		PRESENTLY PROPOSED FOR ACQUISITION	PREFERRED METHOD OF ACQUISITION	ESTIMATED COST OF ACQUISITION	
	TWNSHP	RNG	SEC	MERIDIAN			SURFACE ESTATE	SUBSURFACE ESTATE			LAND COSTS (\$1000)	PROCESSING COSTS (\$1000)
1	18N.	1E.	16	SBM	640	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
2	18N.	2E.	16	SBM	640	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
3	18½N.	1E.	36	SBM	640	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
4	19N.	1E.	16	SBM	640	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
5	19N.	1E.	36	SBM	640	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
6	19N.	2E.	16	SBM	640	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
7	19N.	2E.	36	SBM	640	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
8	19N.	3E.	16	SBM	640	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
9	19N.	3E.	36	SBM	640	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
10	20N.	1E.	36	SBM	480	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
11	20N.	2E.	36	SBM	640	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
12	20N.	3E.	36	SBM	640	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0

These figures were derived from Bureau Land Records and provide for more detail than GIS estimates and therefore may differ from acreage summaries in Table 1.







# **Little Lake Canyon**

*CDCA 157*







LITTLE LAKE CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-157)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 33,121 acres

The Little Lake Canyon WSA is located in Inyo County in the northwest portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). Ridgecrest, located roughly 20 miles southeast, is the closest community. The WSA includes 33,044 acres of public lands, administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and 77 acres of private lands (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern boundary of this WSA is marked by the Sequoia National Forest and a road along Tunawee Canyon. The eastern boundary follows the topography of the Sierra's eastern slope, occasionally veering slightly to avoid structures and disturbed areas, until it meets the Los Angeles Aqueduct. From this point, the boundary follows the Los Angeles Aqueduct maintenance road south until it meets Nine Mile Canyon Road. Nine Mile Canyon Road forms the WSA's southern boundary. The western boundary is formed by the Tulare County/Inyo County line and the Inyo National Forest Boundary.

The boundaries of this WSA enclose the eastern slope of a portion of the southern Sierra Nevada. It includes valleys, canyons, alluvial fans, and steep hills that lead into rugged, granite mountains. The vegetation found within the area is very diversified, with the valleys consisting of mostly creosote bush, with some Joshua trees and desert shrubs. In the higher elevations and canyons, desert shrubs, cottonwood trees, grasses, cacti, and scattered pinyon pine are present. Elevations range from 3,393 feet along the eastern bajadas to 7,896 feet on the Sierran ridgetops. This WSA is contiguous with Sacatar Meadow WSA (CA-010-027), administered by the Bishop Resource Area.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use balanced and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE --- 32,225 acres recommended for wilderness  
819 BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

Partial wilderness (98% suitable) is the recommendation for this WSA. The 819 acres in this WSA recommended nonsuitable are released for other uses than wilderness. A total of 32,225 acres are recommended for wilderness. Appendix 1 list all inholdings and provides additional information on their acquisition. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.



The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan.

The suitable portion of the WSA possesses wilderness values which, by far, exceed the criteria specified in the Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964. The suitable portion of the WSA is recommended because of the following: (1) the area possesses outstanding wilderness values; (2) there are many special features within this area that would benefit from wilderness designation; and (3) there are few resource conflicts in this area. Because wilderness values are so significant, the suitability recommendation will preclude any further vehicular use of approximately 13 miles of primitive access routes of travel.

The suitable portion of the area is primeval, shaped and formed by a millennium of natural forces. The WSA is composed of the rugged, eastern face of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The deep, dissected canyons within this area offer countless opportunities for solitude and a variety of primitive recreation experiences. The deep canyons and rugged topography offer the wilderness traveler the opportunity to commune with nature without the conflicts of modern life. The Sacatar Trail offers the wilderness traveler the opportunity to hike through the heart of the WSA.

The Sacatar Trail is one of the few evidences that man has explored this area. This old wagon road, now a faint trail, traverses the area and extends into the adjacent Sacatar Meadow WSA. This trail offers a unique hiking experience. The only other man-made feature in this area is the IADWP Los Angeles Aqueduct which lies just within the WSA's eastern border. Inadvertently, the boundary was drawn along the maintenance road of the aqueduct and therefore, in several instances, the aqueduct itself was captured within the study area. There was never any intention for the aqueduct or the maintenance road to be within the WSA. Although the aqueduct is buried underground, it is within a disturbance area that is 200 feet wide and runs its entire length.

The suitable portion of the WSA has limited mineral potential. A moderate potential for geothermal exists along the eastern border. Because of high potential for geothermal outside of the WSA, this resource is not expected to be developed within this area. A small area along the southern border has a moderate potential for tungsten. Samples from this area have yielded quantities of tungsten trioxide at 0.1% per ton of ore. A small mineral materials (crushed rock) area lies along the eastern border of the WSA.

The entire WSA is overlapped by grazing allotments. Portions of three allotments--the Olancho, the Tunawee, and the Walker Pass allotments--cover this area. Grazing use is both perennial and ephemeral. Although use levels will remain at existing levels on these "grandfathered" allotments, maintenance and development of new range improvements will be somewhat constrained by wilderness designation.

The nonsuitable portion of the WSA is not being recommended as wilderness because of the following: (1) wilderness values within this area are mediocre; and (2) development of geothermal resources within and immediately adjacent to the area would adversely effect wilderness values.



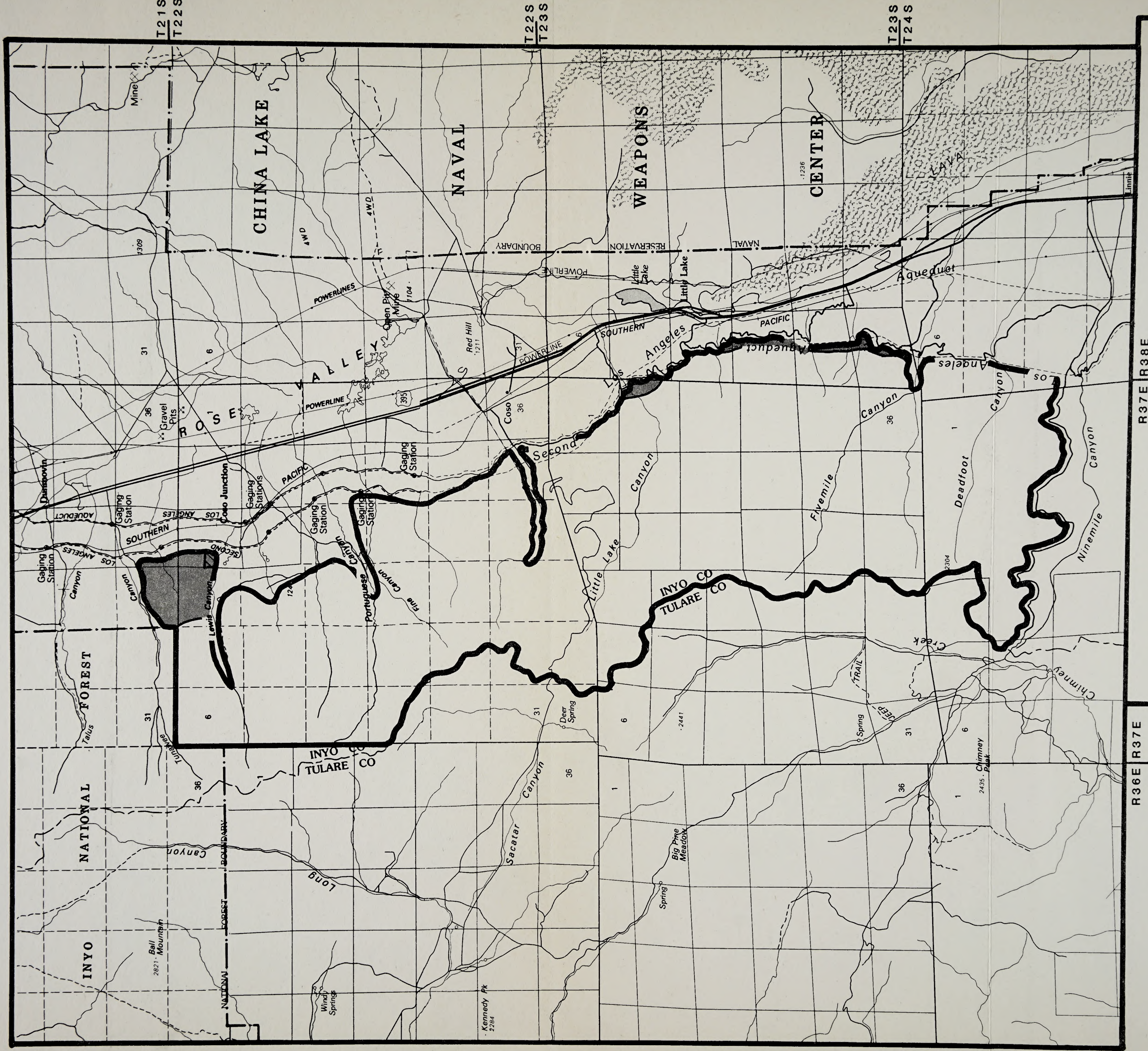
The wilderness values within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA are mediocre. This area is an alluvial fan which has minimal wilderness characteristics and is not as outstanding as the suitable portion of the WSA. The nonsuitable portion of the area offers solitude, but it is not as outstanding as the suitable portion.

A high potential area for geothermal exists along the eastern border of the nonsuitable portion. Should this resource be developed, wilderness values would be negatively impacted.

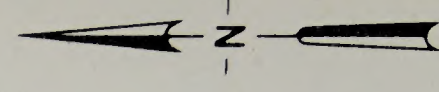








- |  |   |  |              |
|--|---|--|--------------|
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS                  |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |  | STATE        |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | PRIVATE      |



Little Lake Canyon  
Proposal  
MAP-1

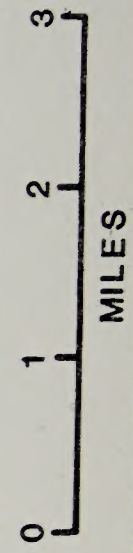








TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	33,044
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		77
Total		<u>33,121</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	32,225
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA) <sup>1</sup>	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA) <sup>1</sup>	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>32,225</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	819
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>819</u>

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1 is a detailed description of inholdings and split estate tracts included within the study. For purposes of this report, split estate lands are defined only as those lands with Federal surface and non Federal subsurface (minerals). Lands that have Federal minerals but non Federal surface should be classified in this report by the owner of the surface estate.



3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The suitable portion of the area has been influenced primarily by the forces of nature. The rugged canyons of the eastern face of the Sierra Nevada Mountains have acted as a barrier, repelling all but the most determined explorers. The only portion of the area which has been influenced by man is Sacatar Canyon, where an old wagon road was built at the turn of the century. Due to lack of use and environmental weathering, the Sacatar Road has turned into the Sacatar Trail. The trail is only used for hiking, mountain bike use and occasional motorcycle use. Larger vehicles cannot negotiate the trail. Portions of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) Aqueduct right-of-way lies just within the eastern boundary of the WSA. The aqueduct is a bladed swath 200 feet wide and is slowly revegetating but will never become substantially unnoticeable. Although portions of the aqueduct are within the WSA due to a mapping error, there was never any intention for the aqueduct or the maintenance road to be included within the WSA boundaries.

The nonsuitable portion of the WSA, in the extreme northeast corner, is natural in character but is not considered to be outstanding because of its lack of topographic and vegetative screening. One parcel of private land lies in the extreme eastern portion of the nonsuitable area.

2. Solitude: Outstanding opportunities for solitude can be found within the suitable portion of the WSA. Deep canyons penetrate into the area and offer wilderness users the opportunity to find seclusion from others and from our technological society.

The nonsuitable portion of the WSA offers solitude, but it is not considered to be outstanding. The northern boundary, the Tunawee Canyon Road, is used by recreationists and private land owners. The noise of vehicles using this popular canyon disturbs the solitude of this area. The southern boundary of the nonsuitable area is a cherrystemmed road. This road is also used by recreationists and the resulting vehicle noise causes a loss of solitude within this small area.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are outstanding within the suitable portion of the WSA. Each canyon within the area offers the wilderness traveler the opportunity to gain a primitive experience.



The mountainous terrain offers challenge to the most ardent wilderness user. The Sacatar Trail offers the wilderness user a superb primitive trail which enters the wilderness at a low elevation and extends into an adjacent suitable portion of Sacatar Meadow WSA (CA-010-027), administered by Bishop Resource Area, at an elevation of 7,400 feet.

The nonsuitable portion of the WSA has very few opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. The alluvial fan is, for the most part, open and does not offer the types of primitive recreation which could be considered outstanding.

4. Special Features: Four areas of high cultural resource sensitivity, covering approximately six square miles, lie within this WSA.

The WSA is within the traditional homeland of the Kawaiisu, Shoshone and Paiute Indians of the Owens Valley. Sites of significance, as well as village sites and collection areas are found within the southern Sierra Nevada and are assumed to occur within this area.

#### B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 15,860 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland and 17,184 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush ecosystems. These types of ecosystems are represented in other portions of the National Wilderness Preservation System but this area is exemplary of both types.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,250,687
Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	4	81,301	74	2,135,405
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,636,883
Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	4	81,301	18	349,935



2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of ten major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria-Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
San Diego	15	1,043,680	100	3,378,814
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of fifteen BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness area is Domelands, administered by Sequoia National Forest, ten miles to the west.

#### C. Manageability

The Little Lake Canyon WSA is manageable as wilderness. This WSA does not have any major wilderness management conflicts. A portion of this area is covered by a temporary withdrawal for Los Angeles Water and Power covering approximately 14,080 acres. The activities proposed under this withdrawal have not been developed and currently, portions of the withdrawal are being recommended for revocation. Due to a mistake in the mapping process in the wilderness inventory, portions of the LADWP California aqueduct were placed within the wilderness study area boundary. If this error is not corrected, maintenance of wilderness values in this area will be affected.



Currently, grazing is occurring within three allotments overlapping this WSA: the Olancha, Tunawee, and Walker Pass. New range improvements are proposed, but will not take effect before an environmental assessment is completed addressing the effects on wilderness values.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

#### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The Little Lake Canyon WSA is located in the BLM Owens Peak Geology-Energy-Mineral (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). The BLM G-E-M narrative in the wilderness section of the CDCA plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III, 1980) stated that mineral resource data for the WSA had not been fully analyzed, integrated, and interpreted at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation. However, the EIS G-E-M narrative stated that, based on the available information, the WSA had potential for metallic minerals, and geothermal resources on the eastern edge. As of December 12, 1979, no unpatented mining claims were recorded with the BLM in the WSA.

The 1980 BLM GRA report and limited file data support the 1980 CDCA EIS statement. Data from the 1980 BLM GRA file was incomplete and did not assess a BLM mineral potential classification for mineral resources. In addition, the available data on geothermal resources was not fully analyzed, integrated, and interpreted into the G-E-M process.

The 1980 BLM GRA file data documented a U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), Conservation Div., 1979 classification of the extreme eastern portion and the northern one-third of the WSA as a Potential Geothermal Resource Area (PGRA) and the existence of a geothermal feature, a warm spring, in the Little Lake Canyon area adjacent to the eastern boundary of the WSA.

Three areas in the WSA were identified by the 1980 BLM GRA file data as having surface geochemical anomalies for metallic and rare earth mineralization. Geochemical anomalies for an area in the northern portion of the WSA indicated the presence of cobalt and cerium, a rare earth. The southern one-half of the WSA displayed a significant anomaly for cobalt and the central portion of the WSA displayed an anomaly for lead.

2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should be Considered in the Final Recommendation: The USGS and U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) conducted mineral surveys of the Little Lake Canyon WSA in 1982 and 1983, respectively. In 1985, BOM released the results of their



survey in an open-file report (MLA 2-85). The BOM data and report were incorporated into a combined report published in 1985 by USGS (Bulletin 1708-B). The following summarizes the findings of the combined report.

BOM identified the Midnite Glow prospect in Nine Mile Canyon at the southern boundary of the WSA as containing an identified resource (20,000 tons at 0.10 percent tungsten oxide) of tungsten ore. BOM also stated that the crushed-stone quarry in Little Lake Canyon was used in the past and could be utilized in the future if there was local demand for the material.

USGS classified the area around the Midnite Glow prospect as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of tungsten resources (See Map 2). In addition, a larger area to the northwest of the prospect, within the WSA, was classified by USGS as having a low mineral resource potential based on favorable geology and geochemical evidence.

USGS also identified a large area in the central portion of the WSA near Little Lake Canyon as having a low potential for the occurrence of tungsten resources. This classification was based on slightly anomalous geochemical values for tungsten, nonmagnetic iron, cobalt and rare earth minerals. USGS states that the occurrence of skarn type metamorphic rocks and the observed geochemical anomalies fit tungsten-skarn type deposit models.

USGS noted the potential for the occurrence of geothermal resources in the Coso Known Geothermal Resource Area (KGRA). USGS stated that the areas surrounding a KGRA are considered lands valuable for prospecting for geothermal resources. However, the entire Little Lake Canyon WSA was not evaluated by USGS and BOM for geothermal resources.

At the time of the 1980 GRA mineral assessment, the northeastern boundary of the WSA did not encompass land which is now included in the Coso Known Geothermal Resource Area (KGRA). A portion of the northeastern boundary of the WSA does extend into the KGRA. Based on the BLM classification system, this area is classified as having a high potential for the occurrence of geothermal resources. In addition, the northeastern and eastern portions of the WSA are classified by the BLM (1984) as prospectively valuable for geothermal resources. Based on favorable geologic environment, known hot springs at Little Lake, and geothermal development 12 miles east at Coso, this area is classified under the BLM mineral classification system as having a moderate potential for geothermal resource occurrence.

The immediate area surrounding the crushed stone pit identified by BOM in Little Lake Canyon is classified as having a high potential for the occurrence of this commodity based on past production and the increased demand likely to occur with the continued expansion of the nearby Coso geothermal project on the China Lake Naval Weapons Center.



BLM mineral records dated December, 1987, did not document any unpatented mining claim or mineral leases in the WSA.

E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: In the suitable portion of the WSA, the values will be maintained. In the nonsuitable portion of the WSA, wilderness values may be impacted by development of geothermal resources or development on the private land on the east side of the area.
2. Impact on Locatable Mineral Exploration and Development: Opportunities for locatable mineral exploration and development will be precluded by wilderness designation. Within the nonsuitable area, mineral exploration and development will be allowed to continue, subject to the regulations stated in 43 CFR 3809 regarding surface disturbance, as well as any additional constraints stated in the CDCA Plan.
3. Impact on Cattle Grazing: Grazing levels will not be reduced by wilderness designation. The grazing activity is a grandfathered activity. Maintenance or placement of range improvements will be constrained by the restrictions placed on the use of motorized vehicles and mechanized equipment in a designated wilderness area.
4. Impact on LADWP California Aqueduct: The proposed action will have no impact on the Aqueduct because it is within an existing right-of-way. The right-of-way was designated by Congress in 1906.
5. Impact on Native American Values: Within the suitable portion of the WSA, Native Americans would not be able to use motorized vehicles to gather plant fibers or to gain access for spiritual/ritual uses. There would be no change relative to this activity within the nonwilderness portion of the area.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

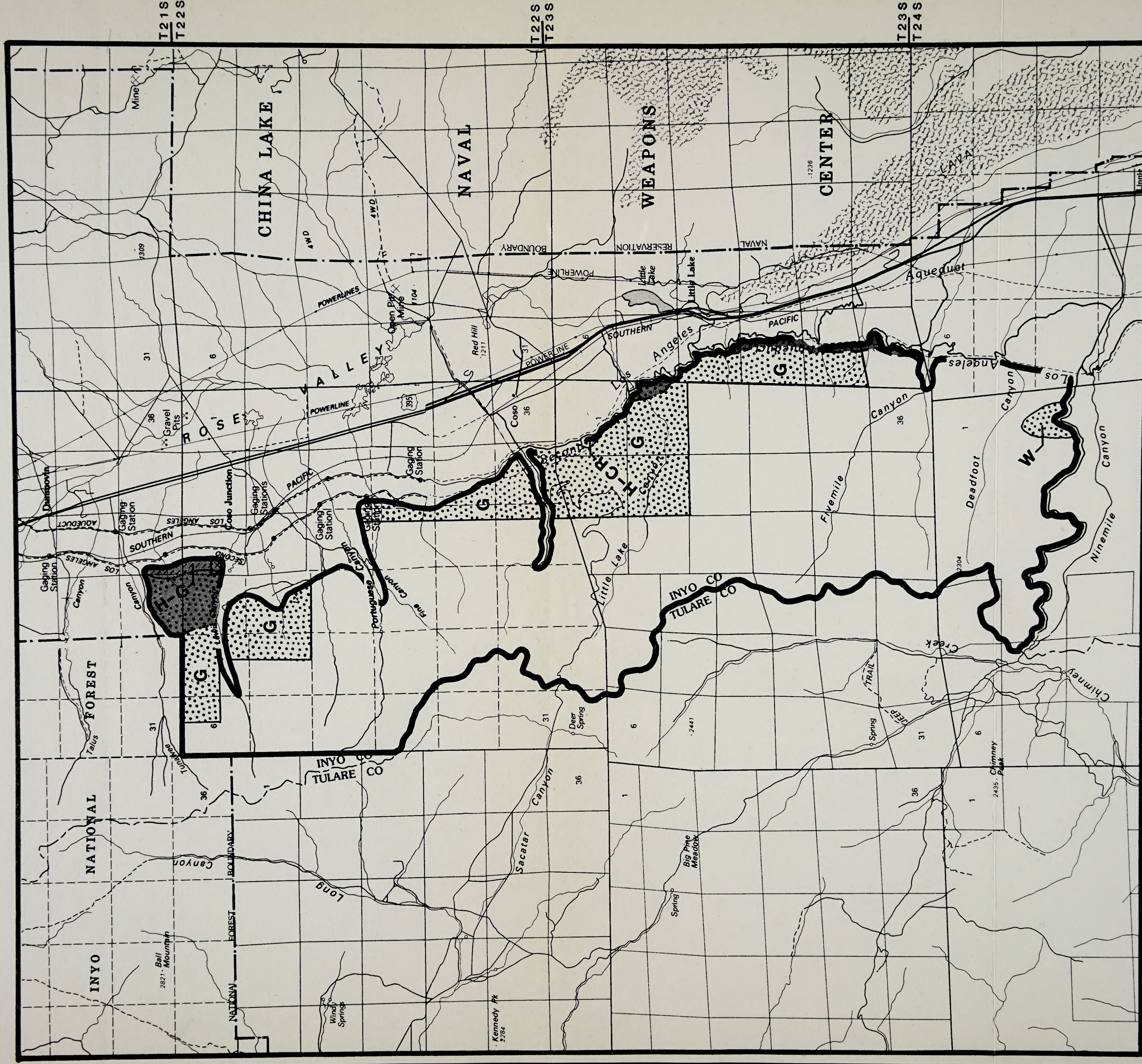
G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.









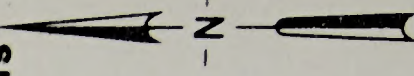
- Recommended for Wilderness
- Recommended for Non Wilderness
- Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness
- Split Estate
- State
- Private

- High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
- Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
- Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area
- High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area

Commodity Symbols

- CR Crushed Rock
- G Geothermal
- W Tungsten

Explanation



Little Lake Canyon  
Mineral Resource Potential

0 1 2 3  
MILES

MAP-2  
CDCA-157







1. Inventory Phase: A variety of comments reflected the overall natural condition and opportunities for primitive recreation, as well as the presence of roads and ways. Further field examination yielded no changes in the findings.
2. Study Phase: Of the 40 comments on this WSA, 18 favored wilderness designation. The area contains a great variety of life forms, including mammals, birds (especially eagles), reptiles, and unusual plants. Riparian sites along the watercourses are particularly important. The area should be studied by students of botany, ornithology, mammalogy and herpetology to learn about "species spillover" between the east and west sides of the Sierra Nevada range.

One respondent stated that the area's contiguity to Domeland Wilderness would provide the opportunity for week-long hikes (the area is not contiguous). Since the area adjoins a proposed RARE II area, respondents felt that the BLM and the Forest Service should coordinate on the management of these contiguous lands.

Respondents opposing wilderness designation mentioned the detracting of wilderness qualities by the sights and sounds of the nearby highway, railroad, aqueduct and valley communities. Many preferred to continue accustomed activities of hunting and vehicular recreation in this area. One person stated that this was the best area in the state for hunting quail, chukar and rabbits. A wish to allow continued mining was also expressed.

One comment was received in response to the Public Input Workbook (3/15/79). It requested that the area receive wilderness recommendation to protect ecological values.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: Most of the comments on the Draft Plan Alternatives treated this WSA as part of the total wilderness system of the CDCA. The National Outdoor Coalition, a coalition of mining, rock-hounding and off-highway vehicle groups recommended that this area be designated unsuitable to wilderness status and classified Multiple Use Class "M" (medium use). A large number of club members sent in printed coupons and letters supporting this position. Conservation oriented groups advocated wilderness designation for the area. The County of Inyo's Board of Supervisors opposed wilderness in favor of Class "M," stating that the BLM had failed to consider mineral resources.
4. Proposed Plan: Comments and positions of respondents were similar to those described for Draft Plan Alternatives. In addition, the National Forest Service requested further coordination on adjoining potential wilderness lands. They asked that BLM defer its decision of this WSA until Sequoia National Forest completes its studies on contiguous lands, so that classifications could be made simultaneously.



5. 1982 Plan Amendments: In 1982, Inyo County Board of Supervisors proposed a change in designation for the southern half of the WSA to Class M (medium use), for the reason that, according to a map in the Desert Plan, the area had "unqualified potential for locatable minerals." The proposed amendment was rejected.

One hundred and five letters responded to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement on this issue - one hundred opposed and five in favor. Five more letters replied to the Final EIS, four against and one in favor. The reasons for opposition were the same as those given throughout the Desert Planning Process. In addition, protection of cultural resources was emphasized. The State of California Resources Agency urged rejection of the amendment due to potential effects on wildlife and cultural resources. The amendment was opposed by 20 groups and favored by three.



APPENDIX 1  
ESTIMATED COSTS OF ACQUISITION OF NON-FEDERAL HOLDINGS WITHIN  
AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR DESIGNATION  
LITTLE LAKE CANYON WSA (CDCA-157)

PARCEL No.	LEGAL DESCRIPTION				TOTAL ACREAGE	NUMBER OF OWNERS	TYPE OF OWNERSHIP BY ESTATE		PRESENTLY PROPOSED FOR ACQUISITION	PREFERRED METHOD OF ACQUISITION	ESTIMATED COST OF ACQUISITION	
	TWNSHP	RNG	SEC	MERIDIAN			SURFACE ESTATE	SUBSURFACE ESTATE			LAND COSTS (\$1000)	PROCESSING COSTS (\$1000)
1	21S.	37E.	34	MDM	40	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	PURCHASE	2.5	2.5
2	22S.	37E.	3	MDM	40	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	PURCHASE	2.5	2.5
3	23S.	37E.	12	MDM	40	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	PURCHASE	2.5	2.5

These figures were derived from Bureau Land Records and provide for more detail than GIS estimates and therefore may differ from acreage summaries in Table 1.







# Owens Peak

*CDCA 158*







## OWENS PEAK WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-158)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA ---

53,823 acres

Owens Peak WSA is in northeastern Kern County and southwest Inyo County, at the northwestern edge of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The nearest city is Ridgecrest, approximately 15 miles southeast. The study area contains 51,560 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), 1,598 acres of split-estate, and private ownership totalling 665 acres (see Map 1 and Table 1).

State Highway 178 forms the WSA's southern boundary. The western boundary is the administrative boundary of the California Desert Conservation Area which can be further described as follows: From Walker Pass, the west WSA boundary follows the ridgeline north to the point where Inyo, Kern, and Tulare Counties meet. The boundary then proceeds west along the Kern-Tulare County line for almost one and one-half miles, then cuts sharply east back to the Inyo-Tulare County line. The remainder of the western boundary conforms to the Inyo-Tulare County line. Ninemile Canyon Road forms the north boundary, and separates Owens Peak WSA from the adjacent Little Lake Canyon WSA (CDCA-157). From Ninemile Canyon, the eastern boundary follows the Los Angeles Aqueduct maintenance road to Sand Canyon, where it cherrystems a road, portions of two ways, and several structures. The boundary then returns to the aqueduct maintenance road, and follows it south to Grapevine Canyon. At Grapevine Canyon, the boundary cherrystems a maintained road and several structures in the canyon bottom. Returning to the mouth of the canyon, the boundary winds around the ridge approximately between 3,250 and 3,500 feet to Short Canyon. From Short Canyon, the boundary continues to wind around the slope, this time at approximately 3,700 feet, to Indian Wells Canyon. Here the boundary cherrystems the maintained Indian Wells Canyon Road, and excludes intensively mined areas at the base of the peaks. Returning to near the mouth of Indian Wells Canyon, the boundary once again follows the Los Angeles Aqueduct maintenance road until it meets State Highway 178 and the southern boundary.

The Los Angeles Aqueduct is within a 200 foot right-of-way designated by Congress in 1906. Where the aqueduct is above ground, the edge of the right-of-way forms the WSA boundary. Between Grapevine and Short Canyons, and again between Short and Indian Wells Canyon, the aqueduct is inside the WSA, in tunnels that cut straight through the ridges separating the canyons.

Several withdrawals overlies portions of the study area. A large part of the western and southern portions of the WSA are included in a National Cooperative Land and Wildlife Management Area (Public Land Order 2594). Considerable acreage is involved in a stock driveway withdrawal (Secretarial Order of April 17, 1934, Stock Drive Way #235). Forty acres in the southwest corner of Township 25 South, Range 38 East, Section 28 has been withdrawn as a public water reserve.



The WSA is composed of steep mountains, dominated by Owens Peak at approximately 8,475 feet, with deep canyons running east and west throughout the study area. Along the eastern edge of the WSA are valleys, some relatively spacious and open, others small and walled in by mountains. The Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail passes through part of the west side of the study area. Vegetation is Juniper-Pinyon woodland (with sagebrush) at upper elevations and creosote bush at lower elevations. The WSA is a transition zone between the Great Basin and Mojave Desert.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

2.	<u>RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE</u> ---	26,285	acres recommended for wilderness
		27,045	BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

Forty percent suitable partial wilderness is the recommendation for the Owens Peak WSA. In addition, 172 acres of private land would be acquired. The acres in this WSA recommended nonsuitable are released for uses other than wilderness. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan.

The partial wilderness recommendation is based on the following rationale: (1) the area recommended for wilderness possesses excellent wilderness values and high scenic quality; (2) the area recommended for nonwilderness possesses lower quality wilderness values, containing more human intrusions that detract from naturalness; (3) the area recommended for wilderness is easily manageable and would require little displacement of traditional recreation activities; and (4) large portions of the area recommended for nonwilderness receive off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation, and have less manageable boundaries than the recommended wilderness area.

The recommended wilderness area is remote high country, with very few human imprints to detract from naturalness. The virtually unaltered landscape, combined with the screening effect of topography and vegetation, assures ample opportunities for solitude. A wide range of primitive recreation opportunities are possible, limited only by the interests and skills of the visitor. The area provides excellent opportunities for basic primitive recreation activities such as hiking and backpacking, enhanced by a four and one-half mile portion of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail that is within or bordering on this area. Opportunities also exist within the recommended wilderness area for more specialized activities such as rock climbing. Both casual groups and rock climbing classes use the area for this purpose. High scenic quality adds to the attractiveness of this area for primitive recreation.



The area recommended for nonwilderness contains primitive ways, and more evidence of past mining and prospecting activity than does the recommended wilderness area. These human imprints reduce opportunities for solitude, which are also affected by the sights and sounds of OHV recreation taking place on cherrystemmed routes in the area, and routes bordering the WSA to the east. This area's lack of remoteness also reduces the quality of the primitive recreation experience. This area contains no special features that enhance or diversify the types of primitive recreation that may be enjoyed. Although this area is still quite scenic and does provide basic opportunities for primitive recreation, when compared to the recommended wilderness area, its wilderness values are inferior. There are approximately 60 miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.

The proposed wilderness is compatible with existing recreation use patterns. Only three miles of presently open primitive ways would be closed to motor vehicles, in the upper reaches of Sand Canyon and the South Fork of Sand Canyon. The remainder of the recommended wilderness area does not contain any areas or routes that are open to vehicles. Only nonmotorized uses are occurring, which will be enhanced by wilderness designation.


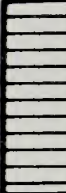




Significantly more motorized use would be displaced were the recommended nonwilderness to be added to the National Wilderness Preservation System. The lower portions of the routes in Sand Canyon are in this area, as are routes of travel in Grapevine and Indian Wells Canyons, and the Walker Well area. In addition to displacing traditional recreation use, wilderness designation of this area would require considerably more patrol and supervision to protect wilderness values than would the recommended wilderness. Much of the boundary of the recommended nonwilderness portion of the WSA offers no natural barriers to OHV use, and is not aligned with physical features to make it readily discernable.

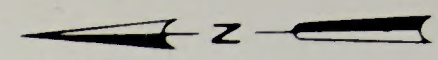








- |   |   |   |              |
|---|---|---|--------------|
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS                  |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |  | STATE        |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | PRIVATE      |



Owens Peak Proposal  
MAP-1

0 1 2 3  
MILES







TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	51,560
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	1,598
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		665
Total		<u>53,823</u>
 <u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		 <u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	25,490
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA) <sup>1</sup>	623
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>26,113</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private <sup>1</sup>		172
 <u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		 <u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	26,070
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	975
Total BLM Lands Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>27,045</u>

<sup>1</sup>Appendix 1 is a detailed description of inholdings and split estate tracts included within a study. For purposes of this report, split estate lands are defined only as those lands with Federal surface and non Federal subsurface (minerals). Lands that have Federal minerals but non Federal surface should be classified in this report by the owner of the surface estate.



### 3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

#### A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The recommended wilderness portion of Owens Peak WSA contains minimal human imprints. A few unmaintained primitive ways follow canyon bottoms, but are not noticeable within the area as a whole. Also, some small scale mineral prospects are present, but these sites are screened by topography and are substantially unnoticeable.

The recommended nonwilderness portion of the study area contains more primitive vehicle ways, some of which receive minor maintenance work, and more and larger scale mineral prospects than the recommended wilderness area. In addition, there are a few range improvements.

2. Solitude: The high winding canyons, pinyon pine forest at the higher elevations, and diverse terrain help screen visitors from each other and provide a feeling of isolation and remoteness throughout the study area.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: Opportunities exist for hiking, backpacking, and hunting, enhanced by the completed segment of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail within the recommended wilderness area. High scenic quality and the presence of other areas of undeveloped BLM and Forest Service administered land adjacent to this WSA further enhance primitive recreation opportunities. The granite faces of the peaks are used by technical rock climbing classes and casual climbing groups. Various search and rescue teams hold training and seminar sessions along the Owens Peak ridges.
4. Special Features: Approximately four and one-half miles of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail is within or adjacent to the Owens Peak WSA. Open to non motorized use only, this Congressionally designated national scenic trail follows the crests of the west coast mountains from Canada to Mexico. Although the entire route of the trail has been plotted, some segments still must be constructed. When complete, the trail will span a distance of 2,500 miles.

Within the recommended wilderness area, surface water is plentiful - three perennial streams are present.



No Federally listed rare, threatened, or endangered species of wildlife are known to occur within Owens Peak WSA.

Ninemile Canyon phacelia (Phacelia novermillensis) is the only sensitive plant which occurs in the WSA. Specimens have been taken from Ninemile Canyon and it is possible that it occurs in Sand and No Name Canyons to the south. It occupies rocky to gravelly slopes in the pinyon-juniper zone between 6,000 and 7,000 feet.

Pictographs and campsites provide evidence that the area has been inhabited seasonally for perhaps as much as 6,000 years. Archaeological sites found at higher elevations within the WSA provide evidence that pinyon pines provided an important staple in the diet of prehistoric populations. These specialized sites, combined with the villages and campsites located near the WSA, portray a sophisticated subsistence pattern based on seasonal exploitation of plants and animals, and a widespread trading network throughout California and beyond.

Some of the prominent landmarks in this WSA have important heritage or religious significance to Native Americans.

#### B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 22,156 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush and 31,002 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland ecosystems. The Owens Peak WSA is in a transition zone between the American Desert Province, Creosote bush (Larrea) vegetative assemblage and the Intermountain Sagebrush Province, Juniper-pinyon woodland (Juniperus-Pinus) vegetative assemblage, as defined by Bailey and Kuchler. The WSA's position between these two major ecological provinces give it an unusually rich diversity of plant and animal species. The high elevations provide habitat for typical Sierra Nevada species, while the lowlands typify the Mojave Desert environment.



Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	4	81,301	75	2,121,086
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,246,303
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	3	61,701	18	335,616
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,632,499

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of ten major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of wilderness areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of these population centers.

Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria-Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
San Diego	15	1,043,680	100	3,378,814
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463



3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The closest designated area is the Domeland Wilderness, approximately ten miles west. Within 50 air miles are two other wilderness areas, Golden Trout and South Sierra. All three areas are administered by the Sequoia National Forest. Six BLM study areas recommended for wilderness designation are within 50 air miles. One of these, Little Lake Canyon (CDCA-157), is immediately north of Owens Peak WSA, across Nine Mile Canyon Road.

#### C. Manageability

The entire Owens Peak WSA is manageable as wilderness. The recommended wilderness portion is more readily manageable than the area recommended for nonwilderness.

The portion recommended for wilderness contains only Federal lands administered by the BLM, with no State or private inholdings. With the exception of two vehicle access points in the Sand Canyon area, the boundaries of the proposed wilderness are either in terrain that is inaccessible by motor vehicle, or are well-defined by physical features.

The portion recommended for nonwilderness contains over 2,000 acres of private inholdings, which would be desirable to acquire should the area become wilderness. Portions of the recommended nonwilderness area contain primitive ways which are presently open to motor vehicle use, principally in Indian Wells and Sand Canyons, and the route to Walker Well. Although a motor vehicle closure has been in effect since 1978 over much of the southern two-thirds of the WSA from Freeman Canyon to Sand Canyon, the areas mentioned above were excluded from this closure, and currently receive vehicle based recreation. In addition, this portion of the WSA has about 21 miles of boundary that is not protected by terrain against inadvertent vehicle trespass, and which for the most part lacks an obvious physical feature to define the boundary. Considering these factors, this portion of the WSA would require considerably more visitor use supervision to manage as wilderness than would the area recommended for designation.

Within the entire WSA, any development of valid mining claims in areas of mineral potential would create manageability problems and a loss of wilderness values.

The entire WSA is within the Walker Pass Cattle Grazing Allotment. This allotment annually provides 12,000 animal unit months (AUMs) of forage, and is grazed from November through June. In the event of wilderness designation, grazing can continue in the same manner and degree as at present, and therefore no management conflicts are expected.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.



#### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The Owens Peak WSA is located in the BLM Owens Peak Geology-Energy-Mineral (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). The G-E-M resource data for the WSA had not been fully analyzed, integrated, and interpreted at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation. However, based on the available information, the WSA was classified as having potential for tungsten, copper and gold. As of December 12, 1979, 27 unpatented mining claims were recorded within the WSA.

The 1980 BLM GRA file data documented a gamma-ray thorium anomaly in the extreme southwestern portion of the WSA.

In addition, the 1980 BLM GRA report documented data that assigned a high potential for tungsten in the southeastern portion of the WSA. The file data also assigned an estimated value of \$533,000 (1979) to known and possible deposits of tungsten in this area.

2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should be Considered in the Final Recommendation: The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) conducted mineral surveys of the portion of Owens Peak WSA recommended for wilderness designation in 1982 and 1983, respectively. The recommended nonwilderness portion of the WSA was not evaluated.

In 1985, BOM issued the results of the 1983 study in an open-file report (MLA 2-85). The BOM data was incorporated into a combined report published in 1985 by USGS (Bulletin 1708-B). The following summarizes the findings of the combined report.

The BOM identified several mines (Magnolia, Blue Max, Buckhorn) in the south-central portion of the WSA as being within the Indian Wells Canyon (gold) Mining District. BOM cited past production of 215 tons of gold ore and 97 tons of tungsten ore from the Magnolia Mine; 64 tons of tungsten ore from the Blue Max prospect; and 83 tons of tungsten ore from the Buckhorn Mine. In addition, BOM stated that the Magnolia Mine contains sub-economic gold resources of 1.2 million tons averaging 0.02 ounce per ton, with byproduct silver. The BOM also identified 20,000 tons of sub-economic (0.10% tungsten oxide) tungsten ore at the Midnite Glow prospect in Ninemile Canyon at the northern boundary of the WSA.

The USGS classified the area surrounding the Midnite Glow prospect in the northern portion of the WSA as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of a tungsten resource (See Map 2). An area in the south-central portion of the WSA in Indian Wells Canyon, encompassing the Blue Max and Magnolia Mines, was classified by the USGS as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of gold and tungsten resources. A smaller area to the northwest was also



classified as having a low potential for the occurrence of gold and tungsten. The USGS classified the northern one-third of the WSA as having a low potential for the occurrence of lead, copper and tungsten resources based on favorable geology and anomalous geochemical levels. In addition, USGS classified a small area at the head of Sand Canyon, surrounding the KE-NYO-TAC prospect, as having a low potential for the occurrence of skarn type tungsten deposits.

The limited amount of 1980 BLM GRA file data and the data and conclusions outlined in the 1985 BOM and USGS report generally agree. The USGS combined report made no mention of the thorium anomaly documented in the 1980 BLM GRA report in the southwestern portion of the WSA. However, based on the BLM classification system, this area can be classified as having a low potential for the occurrence of uranium. In addition, the 1980 BLM GRA file data cite the occurrence of a past feldspar producing prospect in the Five Mile Canyon area and estimate a past production of 50 tons.

Since 1980, one Plan of Operations to conduct exploration and mining related activities within the WSA has been filed with the BLM. The Plan of Operations addressed proposed activities to be conducted at the Magnolia Mine in an area classified by the USGS as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of gold and tungsten resources.

Unpatented lode mining claims are concentrated in the recommended nonwilderness southeastern, central, and eastern portions of the WSA. Unpatented placer mining claims are located in the southern portion of the WSA and the southern part of the recommended wilderness portion of the WSA. A mill site location has been filed in the central portion of the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA. Unpatented mining claims in the WSA are summarized in the table below taken from BLM records dated December, 1987.

Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
MINING CLAIM						
Lode	11	6	17	220	120	340
Placer	1	18	19	40	720	760
Mill Site	1	0	1	5	0	5
Total	13	24	37	265	840	1,105















#### E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Overall, wilderness values will be retained in the 40% of the WSA to be designated wilderness. However, severe site-specific adverse impacts to wilderness values will occur if any valid mining claims are developed. In the nonwilderness portion of the WSA, wilderness values will decline over the long-term in the area of moderate gold and tungsten potential as a result of exploration and development, and in areas used for OHV recreation. Existing wilderness values will be retained in the nonwilderness portions of the WSA not subjected to these two uses.
2. Impact on Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail: The affected portion of the trail is within, or on the western border of, the area recommended for wilderness. The future quality of primitive recreation opportunities on this segment of the trail will thus be assured.
3. Impact on Habitat of Ninemile Canyon Phacelia: The known habitat of this plant in Ninemile Canyon will be within the wilderness area and therefore protected against surface disturbance to the maximum extent possible. Site-specific adverse impacts would occur if valid mining claims are developed. In the canyons to the south the areas between 6,000 and 7,000 feet considered most likely to harbor this plant are within the recommended wilderness.
4. Impact on Native American Uses and Values: Sacred features will be protected under the American Indian Religious Freedom Act. Any changes in physical appearance or use of sacred sites will be made only in consultation with the appropriate Native American group.
5. Impact on Archeological Resources: All proposed surface disturbing activities will be subjected to environmental analysis to allow the detection and salvage of any resources.
6. Impact on Locatable Mineral Exploration and Development: Forty percent of the WSA will be withdrawn from mineral entry. Development of the 12 existing claims will be subject to proof of a valid discovery. There will be no impact to exploration and development on 60% of the WSA, which presently contains 24 claims.

#### F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.



#### G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Known inaccuracies are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: The large number of comments received were mostly in favor of giving the area further wilderness study because of outstanding flora and fauna and rugged terrain; others referred to imprints of man's activities. The latter portions were excluded wherever appropriate.
2. Study Phase: Of the 50 comments on this WSA, 27 favored wilderness designation. The following reasons were given: This area is a unique transition zone between the Sierra Nevada and the desert. In fact, the entire WSA is an ecosystem which should be protected. It contains at least three plants listed by the California Native Plant Society as rare and/or endangered (BIM has confirmed sightings of only one rare plant within the WSA) as well as a great diversity of other plants. Short Canyon and Sand Canyon are used as an educational classroom or field laboratory for students of ecology, botany, geology, entomology, etc. Riparian habitat is noteworthy. Wilderness designation will permit a wilderness experience on the Pacific Crest Trail which traverses this section. Proximity to the communities of Indian Wells Valley provides an opportunity for a one day wilderness experience. This area is needed for primitive recreation such as picnicking, sightseeing and hiking to counterbalance the large areas nearby which are given over to motorized vehicle recreation. The area is adjacent to wilderness lands (RARE II) in the Forest Service to the west.

Opponents wanted to keep the area open for recreational activities such as hunting for quail, chukar and rabbits; camping; and motorized vehicle use. Rock climbers especially wanted to keep open the road to Bill's Butte, as area used for training climbers. Robbers Roost and Indian Wells Canyon roads were needed for access for picnics, sightseeing, and wilderness hiking. Sights and sounds which were considered to detract from wilderness quality were transmission lines, off-highway vehicle impacts, the aqueduct, active mines, military overflights, roads and valley communities. Wildlife guzzlers which have been constructed by the California Department of Fish and Game require maintenance; they can detract from wilderness quality in spite of being beneficial to wildlife.

One comment was received in response to the Public Input Workbook of 3/15/79. It stated that the area is a valuable botanical unit, containing fine scenic values which need preservation through wilderness status.



3. Draft Plan Alternatives: Most of the comments on the Draft Plan Alternatives treated this WSA as part of the total wilderness system of the CDCA. The National Outdoor Coalition, a coalition of mining, rockhounding, and off-highway vehicle groups recommended that this area be designated unsuitable for wilderness status and classified for moderate intensity multiple use. A large number of club members sent in printed coupons and letters supporting this position. Conservation oriented groups advocated wilderness designation for the area. The County of Inyo Board of Supervisors opposed wilderness in favor of moderate intensity multiple use, stating that the BLM had failed to consider mineral resources.
4. Proposed Plan: Comments and positions of respondents were similar to those described for Draft Plan Alternatives. In addition, the Sequoia National Forest requested further coordination on adjoining potential wilderness lands. They asked that BLM defer its decision on this WSA until Sequoia National Forest completes its studies on contiguous lands, so that classifications could be made simultaneously.
5. 1982 Plan Amendment: In 1982, Inyo County Board of Supervisors proposed a change in designation for the southern half of the WSA to Class M (moderate intensity multiple use), for the reason that, according to a map in the CDCA Plan, the area had unqualified potential for locatable minerals. The proposed amendment was rejected. One hundred and five letters were received in response to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement on this issue -- 100 opposed and five in favor.

Five more letters replied to the Final EIS, four opposed and one in favor.

The reasons for opposition were the same as those given throughout the planning process. In addition, protection of cultural resources was emphasized. The State of California Resources Agency urged rejection of the amendment due to potential effects on wildlife and cultural resources. The amendment was opposed by 20 groups and favored by three. The amendment proposal was dropped from further consideration.



APPENDIX 1  
ESTIMATED COSTS OF ACQUISITION OF NON-FEDERAL HOLDINGS WITHIN  
AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR DESIGNATION  
OWENS PEAK WSA (CDCA-158)

PARCEL No.	LEGAL DESCRIPTION				TOTAL ACREAGE	NUMBER OF OWNERS	TYPE OF OWNERSHIP BY ESTATE		PRESENTLY PROPOSED FOR ACQUISITION	PREFERRED METHOD OF ACQUISITION	ESTIMATED COST OF ACQUISITION	
	TWNSHP	RNG	SEC	MERIDIAN			SURFACE ESTATE	SUBSURFACE ESTATE			LAND COSTS (\$1000)	PROCESSING COSTS (\$1000)
1	24S.	37E.	34	MDM	370	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	PURCHASE	37.0	2.5
2	25S.	37E.	2,3,11	MDM	425	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	PURCHASE	42.0	2.5
3	25S.	37E.	13,24	MDM	100	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	PURCHASE	10.0	2.5
4	25S.	37E.	24	MDM	160	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	PURCHASE	16.0	2.5

---

These figures were derived from Bureau Land Records and provide for more detail than GIS estimates and therefore may differ from acreage summaries in Table 1.



# Cow Heaven

*CDCA 159*







## COW HEAVEN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-159)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA ---

8,873 acres

The Cow Heaven WSA is located in Kern County in the northwest portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The City of Ridgecrest is approximately 30 miles to the northeast. The area is composed of 8,155 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and 718 acres of private land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

State Highway 178 forms the northern border of the Cow Heaven WSA. The east boundary cuts south for one and a half miles and then west for another one and a half miles, following no specific topographic features. A cherrystemmed road enters the WSA at this point and continues into the area for one mile. The boundary continues south for two miles, cuts sharply west for one mile, and then meanders south around a large hill until finally reaching the road in Sage Canyon. The southern boundary follows Sage Canyon Road until it reaches the Sequoia National Forest border. The western boundary is the Sequoia National Forest.

The WSA contains approximately 85% mountains and 15% alluvial fans. The terrain includes eroded hills and canyons of the southern Sierra Nevada Mountains. The remainder of the area is composed of high desert alluvial fans. The elevations range from 4,000 feet at the eastern border to 6,000 feet in the Scodie Mountains along the Sequoia National Forest boundary. The vegetation within the WSA consists of creosote bush and bunch grasses in the lower elevations. The vegetation makes a transition to Joshua trees and desert scrub in the mid elevations and some pinyon/juniper in the higher elevations in the western portion of the area.

The entire WSA is within the Jawbone/Butterbrett Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0	acres recommended for wilderness
8,155	BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for the Cow Heaven WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. Future activities in the area will be controlled by the low intensity management guidelines prescribed for the area in the CDCA Plan. This recommendation



will be implemented in a manner which will use practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan.

The WSA was originally delineated during development of the CDCA Plan as a natural extension of an area being considered for wilderness in the adjacent Sequoia National Forest. It was recognized, however, that the WSA was not manageable as wilderness unless the adjacent area in the Forest was also designated wilderness. The adjacent area in the Sequoia National Forest was not designated wilderness. Designation of the Cow Heaven WSA as wilderness would not contribute any additional unique or distinct features to the National Wilderness Preservation System.

The physical configuration of the WSA is the primary reason that makes the area unmanageable as wilderness. It wraps around a corner of the adjacent National Forest resulting in a long and narrow WSA. The western portion of the WSA is not contiguous with the rest of the area due to several private inholdings. The cherrystemmed road in Cow Heaven Canyon essentially isolates the northern portion of the WSA from the southern portion. Only a narrow, one-half mile passage bridges the WSA together at this point. There are approximately four miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.

The opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation cannot be considered outstanding. In fact, the narrow configuration in conjunction with the cherrystemmed road and the private inholdings, virtually eliminate any such opportunities in the southern half of the WSA. The naturalness of the WSA has also been significantly impacted from off-highway vehicle use. The southern Sierra canyons have traditionally been a spill-over area for off-highway vehicle use from the heavily used Jawbone Canyon Off-Highway Vehicle Area.

The area is a favored recreation area for hiking, hunting, off-highway vehicle touring, car camping, shooting, and sightseeing. Some of the better hunting opportunities for chukar, quail, dove, and rabbit in the CDCA occur in this area. An estimated 18,000 visitor-use days occurred in 1984. There is a teaching and research site within the WSA which receives five to seven visits per year by colleges and universities.

There is significant mineral interest in the WSA. Over one fourth of the entire WSA is encumbered with 66 mining claims. The entire WSA is also within the Rudnick and Walker Livestock Grazing Allotment. Grazing has occurred in the area since pre-1979. Portions of the area contain significant cultural resource values.

The entire WSA is within the Jawbone/Butterbrecht ACEC. Although the WSA does not contain outstanding wilderness values, the area does contain significant wildlife resources. Significant portions of the ACEC, and the WSA, are included in a National Cooperative Land and Wildlife Management



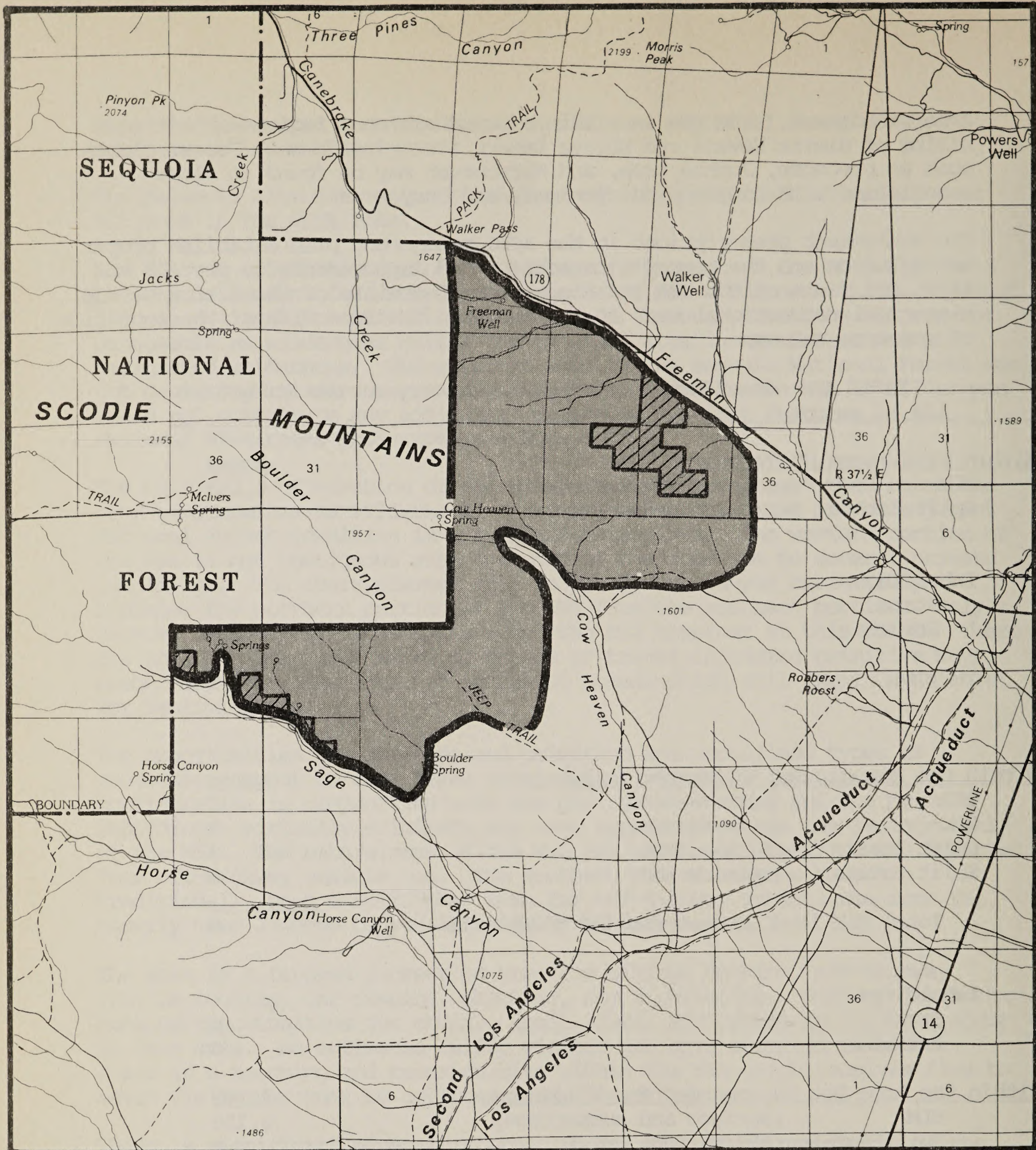
Area withdrawal. The WSA is within a broad ecotonal region exhibiting a mixing of Sierra Nevada and Mojave Desert flora and fauna. Desert plants such as creosote, Joshua tree, and burrobrush may be found in close association with pinyon pine, juniper, and canyon oak.

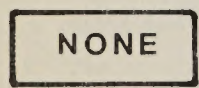

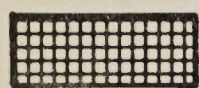
The management prescriptions in the ACEC management plan establish proper use patterns and the appropriate actions and improvements to protect the flora and fauna of the WSA and the eastern foothills of the Sierra Nevada. Historical recreational uses of the area can continue without the sacrifice of resource values.


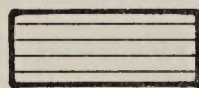

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	8,155
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		718
Total		<u>8,873</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	8,155
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Lands Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>8,155</u>



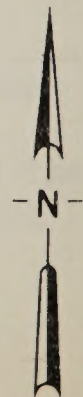


- |   |   |                            |
|---|---|----------------------------|
|  | NONE  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |                            |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |                            |

- |  |              |
|--|--------------|
|  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | STATE        |
|  | PRIVATE      |

**Cow Heaven  
Proposal  
MAP-1**

0 1 2 3  
MILES



CDCA-159  
JUNE, 1988



### 3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

#### A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The western edge of the area is affected primarily by natural forces. The eastern portions of the area have been impacted by off-highway vehicle use, mostly by motorcycle trails. Denuded areas are evident where car camping has occurred within the area. Also, stock watering ponds, troughs and tanks are noticeable within the lower portions. The route of travel in Cow Heaven Canyon extends past the end of the cherrystemmed road and into the adjacent National Forest; cutting the WSA in half and affecting the naturalness of the WSA.
2. Solitude: The interior of the northern portion the WSA has opportunities for solitude. However, solitude along the northern boundary is reduced by vehicle traffic on State Highway 178. The noise of automobiles and frequent heavy truck traffic gearing down from Walker Pass cause a loss of solitude along the entire northern boundary of the WSA. Throughout the rest of the WSA, opportunities for solitude are available only in isolated pockets.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: Primitive recreation occurs within the area in the form of hiking and sightseeing. However, there are few outstanding opportunities for unconfined recreation because of the configuration and narrow constrictions of the WSA boundary.
4. Special Features: The entire WSA is within the Jawbone/Butterbrecht ACEC. Significant portions of the ACEC are included in a National Cooperative Land and Wildlife Management Area withdrawal. The ACEC was designated to protect and manage the wildlife habitat associated with transitional ecotones between the Sierra Nevada and the Mojave Desert. The varied habitats provided by this transition, in conjunction with the available water sources, provide microhabitats for species which would otherwise not survive. The establishment of desert and mountain species has produced a great degree of diversity over a small geographic area. The riparian vegetation present in canyon bottoms attracts a number of migrant and resident bird species.

This area has also been traditionally used by the Kawaiisu, Paiute and Chemehuevi Indians. One area of significance is the Boulder Spring archaeological site. The WSA is also used for religious purposes, vegetation gathering, and other traditional uses.



B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 6,685 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland and 1,470 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush ecosystem. The Cow Heaven WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Even though this WSA does contain a somewhat unusual transition zone, such ecosystems are represented in other WSAs that are recommended for wilderness designation in the CDCA.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	4	81,301	74	2,144,439
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,266,400
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	2	61,701	18	358,969
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,652,596

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of ten major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.



Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

<u>Population Centers</u>	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria-Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
San Diego	15	1,043,680	100	3,378,814
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of six BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness area is Domelands, which is administered by Sequoia National Forest, ten miles to the west of the WSA.

#### C. Manageability

The Cow Heaven WSA is not of itself manageable as wilderness. The wilderness values that are present do stand on their own merit without the adjacent Forest Service area.

The boundary of the WSA is in such a configuration that the northern portion is effectively separated from the southern unit by a cherrystemmed road and a narrow passage. The southern unit is further divided into noncontiguous portions by a block of private inholdings. Without these parcels, management to protect wilderness values is not possible.

The area traditionally receives a significant spill-over from the Jawbone Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) open area. There are many motorcycle trails within the lower elevations of the WSA. It would be difficult to redirect this historic use to other areas.

Over a quarter of the WSA is encumbered with 66 mining claims. Validity examinations on all of the claims would likely result in some claims proving valid. Any subsequent mineral development would be incompatible with wilderness values.



Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

#### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The Cow Heaven WSA is in the BLM Jawbone Canyon Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M resource data in the wilderness section of the CDCA plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) in 1980 was not fully analyzed, integrated, and interpreted at the time of the suitability recommendation. The WSA was not evaluated for mineral resource potential due to lack of sufficient data. As of December 12, 1979, there were no unpatented mining claims located in the WSA.

The BLM GRA file did not classify the WSA for mineral occurrence potential.

2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should be Considered in the Final Recommendation: No U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) or U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral surveys were conducted in the WSA because it is recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

No additional data is available as of January, 1988, therefore no map of the mineral potential is included in this report.

Unpatented placer mining claims are spread throughout the entire WSA. Unpatented lode mining claims are concentrated in the southwestern portion of the WSA. Unpatented mining claims in the WSA are summarized in the following table taken from BLM records dated December, 1987.

Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	MINING CLAIM	SUITABLE	NONSUIT. TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT. TOTAL	
Lode	N/A	25	25	N/A	500	500
Placer	N/A	41	41	N/A	1,640	1,640
Mill Site	N/A	0	0	N/A	0	0
Total	N/A	66	66	N/A	2,140	2,140

#### E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Wilderness values will suffer adverse impacts due to continued use of the area by off-highway vehicles within the area. Although the area contains no identified mineral potentials, any noise, surface disturbance and access requirements for mineral exploration and development will negatively impact naturalness, solitude, and primitive and unconfined types of recreation. However, according to the low intensity management



guidelines prescribed for the area in the CDCA Plan and the Jawbone/Butterbrecht ACEC Plan, strict mitigating measures will be applied to all actions that have the potential to adversely affect sensitive resource values.

2. Impact on Locatable mineral Exploration and Development: Opportunities for exploration and development will continue to be available subject to applicable laws and regulations and the low intensity guidelines in the CDCA Plan and the ACEC Plan.
3. Impact on Vehicle Dependant Recreation: Opportunities for motorized recreation on designated routes of travel will continue to be available within the area.
4. Impact on Cultural Resources and Native American Values: In addition to the existing laws and regulations that protect cultural resource values, resources will be further protected by the management prescriptions contained in the CDCA Plan and the ACEC Plan. Opportunities for motorized access for traditional collection and spiritual use will continue to be available.
5. Impact on Hunting: Opportunities for motorized access to support hunting will continue to be available throughout the WSA.
6. Impact on ACEC and Wildlife Habitat: Opportunities for implementation of a complete spectrum of management actions will continue to be available to protect and enhance riparian and wildlife habitat. Any development from mining operations are expected to result in site-specific impacts.
7. Impact on Livestock Management: Opportunities will continue to be available for the use of mechanized equipment for maintenance and development of new range improvements consistent with guidelines in the CDCA and ACEC Plan.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.



1. Inventory Phase: Comments listed various roads and scars made by motorcycle and off-highway vehicle activity. The nearby aqueduct, a transmission line, and State Highway 178 were said to create noise and visual blight which nullified wilderness quality. Field checks resulted in deletion of areas in the southeast portion of the area.
2. Study Phase: Thirty six comments were received on this WSA. Wilderness designation was opposed by 23 and favored by 13. Among those in opposition were many motorcyclists and off-highway vehicle recreationists who were accustomed to using this area for motorcycle trail riding and vehicle oriented activities, including rockhounding, prospecting, camping and general family recreation. The area at Bill's Butte was cited as the last good training area for rock climbing in the region, particularly since Rober's Roost had been closed. Hunting was another popular activity. Further, the canyons were said to be excellent starting points for taking off into the Sequoia National Forest.

Sights and sounds which were listed as detracting from wilderness quality included neighboring highways with their traffic noise, a transmission line, an aqueduct, and numerous roads and trails which traverse the area. (The transmission line and aqueduct is not within the WSA). Wilderness proponents emphasized the contiguity of RARE II land and the classic wilderness values of the roadless portion of the WSA. Scenic quality, vegetation rare wildflowers, pinyon pines, wildlife, prairie falcon, and riparian habitats were mentioned. A few respondents wanted to combine with WSA 159 with adjacent WSAs and the RARE II area into a large wilderness area, with the roads into the canyons excluded but available as desirable access routes. Others urged rehabilitation of areas damaged by motorized vehicles and grazing. (The RARE II area was dropped from further consideration by the Forest Service.)

Three responses were received to the Public Input Workbook (3/15/79). Two favored wilderness designation because the area's excellent natural and scenic values. The third was from the State of California Department of Fish and Game which recommended against wilderness which they thought might prevent vehicular access to gallinaceous guzzlers and developed springs that are critical to several significant game species populations.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: Few public comments specific to this WSA were received in response to the draft plan alternatives. However, this WSA was one of those opposed by the National Outdoor coalition, a coalition of mining, rockhounding and off-highway vehicle groups. A large number of club members sent in printed coupons supporting a multiple use position designation of "moderate use" for this area; this designation was offered by the Use Alternative. Conservation organizations supported the Protective Alternative which recommended wilderness for this WSA.



4. Proposed Plan: Conservation organizations and vehicle-oriented recreation groups maintained the same position stated for the Draft Plan Alternative. In addition, there were a few letters for and against grazing in the region of this WSA.

No comments were received from local governments.







# **Horse Canyon**

*CDCA 160*







## HORSE CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-160)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA ---

4,595 acres

The Horse Canyon WSA is located in Kern County in the west-central portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The closest community, Ridgecrest, is located roughly 20 miles northeast. The WSA is composed entirely of public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA is bounded in the northeast corner by the Sequoia National Forest Boundary. Elsewhere, the boundary follows topographic features, surrounding the base of a ridge extending from the Scodie Mountains until it again meets the Sequoia National Forest Boundary.

The area consists of five interconnecting hills, remnants of the Scodie Mountains. This range comprises the southern extremity of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Elevations range from 3,400 to 6,771 feet. The higher elevations support stands of Joshua trees, while the intervening slopes are covered with low desert shrubs.

The WSA is totally within the Jawbone-Butterbrecht Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), designated in 1980 to protect outstanding wildlife and Native American values.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced, and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0	acres recommended for wilderness
4,595	BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan.



The WSA is recommended nonsuitable because: (1) the area's value as wilderness is minimal and is exceeded by other resource values; (2) the Sequoia National Forest is no longer proposing the area adjacent to this WSA as a RARE II wilderness area; and (3) the WSA is less than 5000 acres in size.

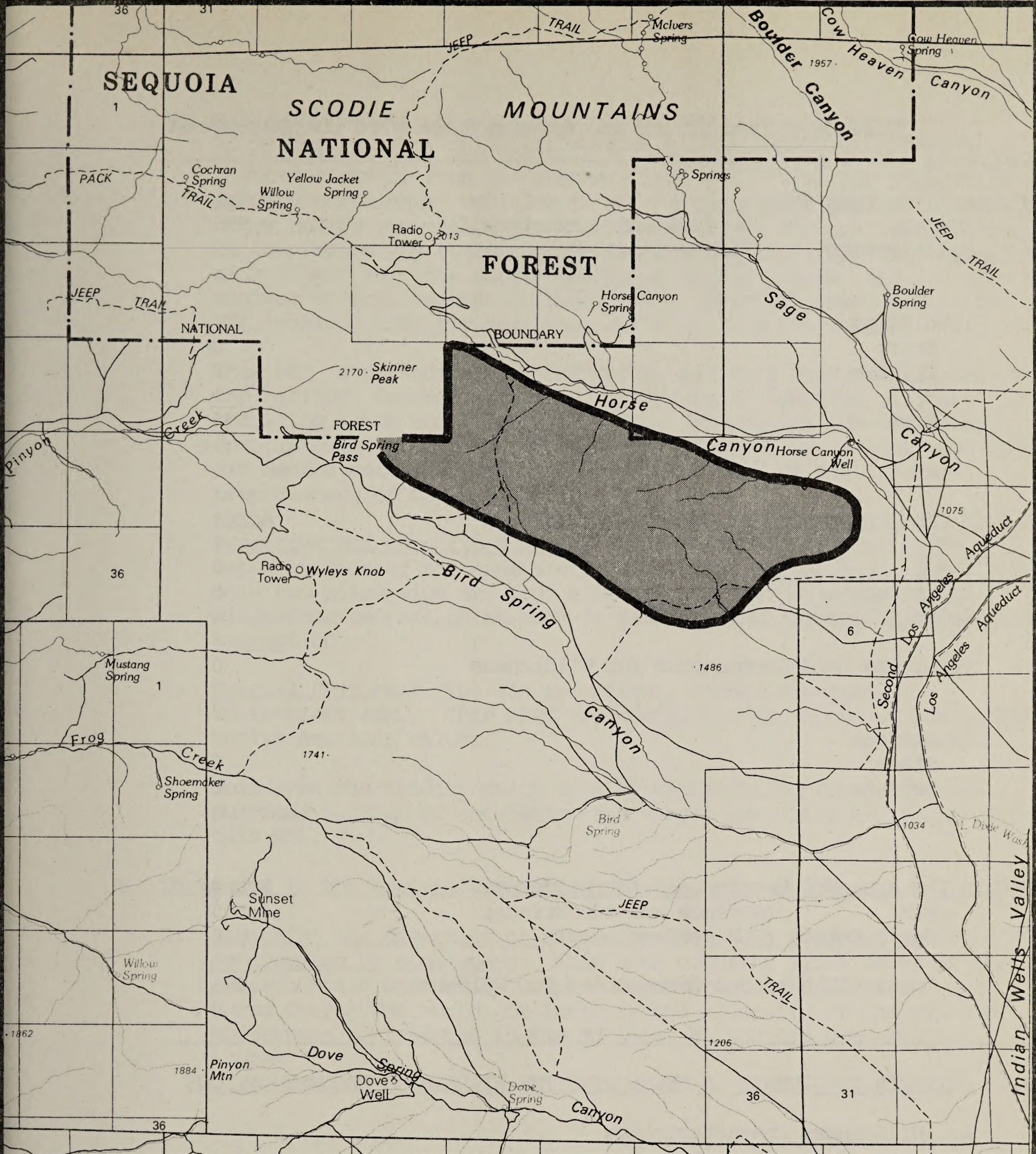
The area has been used by off-highway vehicles for many years, long before the area was recommended for wilderness study. Evidence of this activity consists of well used trails which criss-cross the area and extend over the saddles of the hills. These trails detract from the area's naturalness. There are approximately eight miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.

Opportunities for solitude and for primitive and unconfined recreation are severely limited within the area. The narrow area does not offer the wilderness traveler many opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. Solitude is limited to a few areas which offer vegetative screening. Vehicle use in the canyons on either side of the area has a detrimental effect on solitude within.

At the time of inventory, the Sequoia National Forest was proposing the area adjacent to this WSA as a RARE II area. Since that time, the RARE II status has been dropped and the area has been classified for further study. Without the Forest Service RARE II area, the WSA offers even fewer opportunities for a wilderness experience.

Because of the areas size, it would be difficult to manage. Wilderness values could be virtually preempted by the presence of only a few conflicting uses.





NONE

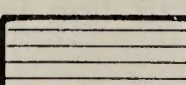
RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS



SPLIT ESTATE



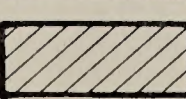
RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS



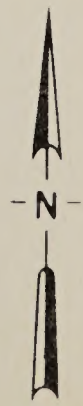
STATE



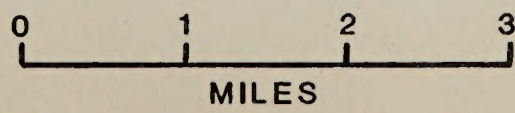
LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS



PRIVATE



Horse Canyon  
Proposal  
MAP-1



CDCA-160  
JUNE, 1988



TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	4,595
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
Total		<u>4,595</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	4,595
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>4,595</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The naturalness in this WSA has been reduced by the many motorcycle and all-terrain vehicle trails which criss-cross the terrain. These trails, which were mentioned by the public in their comments concerning this area, wind along the topography and climb over the passes between the hills. Where the trails are not evident, natural forces act as the primary influence.



2. Solitude: The WSA offers some aspects of solitude but opportunities here are not outstanding. Bird Spring Pass Road lies a short distance from the southern boundary. This road is heavily used by off-highway vehicles to gain access to Kelso Valley and other nearby recreation areas. Solitude near the northern boundary is compromised by recreation vehicles using the Horse Canyon Road to gain access into the Scodie Mountains and as a base camp for off-highway vehicle recreation activities. From all areas within the WSA, vehicle activity and human activity is quite evident.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The primitive recreation opportunities of the area are limited. The narrow area, stretching only two miles wide and four miles long, does not offer the wilderness recreationist much in the way of primitive and unconfined recreation.
4. Special Features: The WSA is entirely within the Jawbone-Butterbrecht ACEC. This ACEC was designated to protect wildlife and Native American values.

This area was traditionally used by the Kawaiisu for collection purposes. Sites of occupation and sacred use areas are found within this WSA.

## B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This area contains 4,595 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland ecosystem. The Horse Canyon WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System.



Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper- Pinyon Woodland	4	81,301	74	2,146,708
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper- Pinyon Woodland	3	61,701	18	361,238

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of ten major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

<u>Population Centers</u>	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria-Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
San Diego	15	1,043,680	100	3,378,814
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of eight BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness area is Domelands, in the Sequoia National Forest, ten miles north of the WSA.



### C. Manageability

The Horse Canyon WSA is manageable as wilderness. However, management would be complicated by several issues.

The existing recreation use of this area is well established and would be difficult to control. Motorcycles have traditionally used this area and their passage has created a network of trails throughout the WSA. The off-highway vehicles have caused a proliferation of hillclimbs, passing through the saddles of the hills in this area.

Because the Sequoia National Forest has dropped their RARE II wilderness study lands adjacent to the WSA, the WSA would have to be managed as a separate unit. Managing this WSA to retain the wilderness values would be extremely difficult.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The Horse Canyon WSA is located in the BLM Jawbone Canyon Geology-Energy-Mineral (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). The BLM G-E-M narrative in the wilderness section of the CDCA plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) was not fully analyzed, integrated and interpreted at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation. However, the EIS G-E-M narrative stated that the WSA has potential for uranium. As of December 12, 1979, there were no unpatented mining claims located in the WSA on record with the BLM.

The 1980 BLM GRA file data does not support the G-E-M statement in the 1980 CDCA EIS for the occurrence potential of uranium. The WSA was not evaluated for mineral resource potential due to lack of sufficient data.

2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should be Considered in the Final Recommendation: No U.S. Geologic Survey (USGS) or U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral surveys have been completed for the WSA because it was recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation. No additional information is available as of February, 1988.

No mineral resource potential map is included in this report because there are no identified mineral values.

Unpatented mining claims in the WSA are summarized in the following table taken from BLM records dated January, 1988.



Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
MINING CLAIM						
Lode	N/A	0	0	N/A	0	0
Placer	N/A	2	2	N/A	80	80
Mill Site	N/A	0	0	N/A	0	0
Total	N/A	2	2	N/A	80	80

E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Wilderness values will suffer adverse impacts due to the continued use of off-highway vehicles on existing routes and trails within the WSA.
2. Impact on Locatable Mineral Exploration and Development: Opportunities for exploration and development of mineral resources will continue to be available within the area, although no mineral potential is known to occur here. This activity will be subject to the regulations stated in 43 CFR 3809 regarding surface disturbance, as well as any additional constraints stated in the CDCA Plan.
3. Impact on Motorized Recreation: Opportunities for motorized recreation on designated routes will continue to be available within the area.
4. Impact on Native American Values: Some Native American values may be jeopardized under less restrictive management. Native Americans will be able to continue to gather plant fiber and carry on with historic uses within the area.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: Respondents listed the following features which detract from wilderness suitability: motorcycle and off-highway vehicle roads and trails, grazing trails, a buried cable, and visual



pollution caused by powerlines, a microwave station, and the Los Angeles aqueduct. Adjustments in the southern boundary were made after field checks. Other respondents praised the naturalness of the area and its opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation.

2. Study Phase: Almost two-thirds (35) of the 56 comments received on WSA 160 opposed wilderness designation for this area. Historically, much of the area has been used for motorcycle racing and trail riding, for OHV-oriented recreation, and for family outings and camping. Members of an organized group (unidentified) wrote to say how much they and their families and friends enjoyed the use of the area. Many added that they appreciated the naturalness of the area and that they took good care of the land and did not disturb the wildlife. Some pointed out the many roads, trails, and scars due to OHV use which make the area unfit for wilderness. Also noted were the visual disturbances due to powerlines, a microwave station and the Los Angeles Aqueduct.

The State of California Department of Fish and Game opposed wilderness designation. They feared that vehicular access for maintenance of upland game guzzlers would be curtailed leading to a decrease in the population of upland game and in the opportunities for hunting. Other activities for which respondents wished to have vehicular access were rockhounding, prospecting, camping, and general OHV enjoyment.

The 21 letters favoring wilderness mentioned the contiguity to USFS RARE II land and the classic traditional wilderness quality of the east slope of the Sierras. They stated that the area is relatively undisturbed. It is part of the Southern Sierra habitat, provides a transition from desert to mountain, contains unique canyons and unpolluted springs, and is important to migrating birds and other wildlife. Outstanding features are Joshua-sage communities, granitic outcroppings, pinyon pines, and excellent opportunities for solitude and primitive types of recreation, such as hiking, nature study, and hunting. Also mentioned were opportunities for college level research in botany, ornithology, mammalogy, and herpetology, along with the request to protect the area until a complete inventory could be completed.

Two comments were received in response to the Public Workbook (3/15/79). Both opposed wilderness, one stated that the area contains less than 5,000 acres. The other said that this is prime OHV recreational land and unsuitable for wilderness because of the many man-made scars and the noise from the aircraft which pass overhead.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: Few public comments specific to this WSA were received in response to the Draft Plan Alternatives. However, this WSA was one of those opposed by the National Outdoor coalition, a coalition of mining, rockhounding and off-road vehicle groups. A



large number of club members sent in printed coupons supporting a multiple use designation of "moderate use" for this area; this alternative was offered by the Use Alternative. Conservation organizations and their members supported the Protective Alternative which recommended wilderness for the WSA.

4. Proposed Plan: Conservation organizations and vehicle-oriented recreation groups maintained the same position stated for the Draft Plan Alternative.

No comments were received from local governments.



# **Kelso Peak**

*CDCA 160B*







## KELSO PEAK WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-160B)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA ---

9,341 acres

The Kelso Peak WSA is located in Kern County in the west central portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The nearest communities are California City; 35 miles south, Ridgecrest, 33 miles northwest; and Mojave; 42 miles south. The area is composed of 7,297 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and 2044 acres of private land. There are no State or split estate lands located within the WSA (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern boundary starts at the Sequoia National Forest border and continues east for three quarters of a mile and then turns south for one mile, east for two miles and then south for six miles, following the lower slopes of the Southern Sierra Mountains until it meets a dirt road. The boundary follows the dirt road at the southernmost end until it meets the Sequoia National Forest border. The boundary follows the Sequoia National Forest Border north until it meets at the northernmost border of the WSA.

The area is composed of 90% mountainous terrain and 10% alluvial plains. The elevation varies from 3,300 to 5,500 feet. The upper slopes of Kelso Peak are dotted with pinyon pine and juniper trees. Intervening slopes are brushy with large granite rock outcroppings. The boulder strewn valleys support dense stands of Joshua trees. No unusual plant assemblages occur within the WSA.

This WSA is located entirely within the Jawbone-Butterbrecht Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). This ACEC contains a highly diverse faunal assemblage exhibiting Mojave Desert, Sierra Nevada, San Joaquin Valley and Transverse Range characteristics.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced, and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0	acres recommended for wilderness
7,297	BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.



The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan.

While the WSA did meet the minimum criteria of wilderness as defined in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964, further studies, during the preparation of the California Desert Plan determined that the area's values as wilderness did not exceed the potential for other uses. The no-wilderness recommendation is based upon the following rationale: (1) the wilderness values are marginal; (2) manageability would be a problem within the WSA due to the location of private land; and (3) the landforms and ecosystems of the WSA are already well represented in other areas recommended as suitable.

A vehicle route which was not identified in the wilderness inventory cuts through the heart of the WSA, impacting the naturalness of the area. This route is used by vehicle dependant recreationists as a conveyance of travel through the WSA and also as access into Sequoia National Forest. Even without the impacts of this route, the wilderness values are marginal as further described in the Wilderness Characteristics section. There are approximately three miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.

Manageability of the WSA is affected by parcels of private land in the northern portion of the WSA. These private lands make up one-fourth of the acreage within the WSA. If these parcels are developed to a use which is nonconforming with wilderness, serious manageability problems will result. Solitude would be impaired and naturalness would be reduced.

The addition of this WSA to the Natural Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) would not add to the diversity or uniqueness of the system, nor would it add significantly to the wilderness opportunities available within the region. Kelso Peak is typical of the surrounding topography and vegetation displayed in the surrounding mountains and hills. There are six BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation within 50 miles. The nearby Domeland Wilderness Area within the Sequoia National Forest possesses similar characteristics of much greater quality.

The WSA is completely within the Rudnick common grazing allotment. Allotment Management Plans (AMPs) will be implemented to improve range conditions and minimize conflicts with other resources.

The WSA is within the Jawbone-Butterbrecht ACEC and will be administered using carefully controlled guidelines to augment natural values and minimize conflicts with other resources.







TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	7,297
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		2,044
Total		<u>9,341</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	7,297
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>7,297</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The area has been affected mostly by natural forces. A vehicle route which was not identified in the wilderness inventory enters the WSA from the eastern border and continues through the middle of the WSA into the Sequoia National Forest. This route cuts the WSA in half. The rest of the WSA is in a relatively natural condition although motorized vehicle use is noticeable throughout the WSA.



2. Solitude: The mountainous portion of the area provides a diversity of terrain. The solitude is not considered to be outstanding. The eastern border of the WSA is immediately adjacent to private houses. Emanating from those homes are the typical noises of rural life.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The entire eastern border is compromised by human habitation in the form of houses and small ranchettes. This portion of the area cannot be considered outstanding for primitive and unconfined recreation. The western portion of the area has opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation due to its diverse topography and vegetation.
4. Special Features: The WSA is part of the Jawbone-Butterbrecht ACEC, so designated for its special wildlife, diverse flora, and Native American values.

The southern tip of this WSA is an area of about one and one-half square miles of very high cultural resource sensitivity. This area was traditionally used by the Kawaiisu for collection purposes. Sites of occupation and sacred use are found within this area.

#### B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 7,297 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland ecosystem. The Kelso Peak WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The Sierra foothills ecosystems are already abundantly represented in the NWPS in the Sequoia and Inyo National Forests, in the National Park wilderness areas and in several of the Bureau's recommended suitable areas.



Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper- Pinyon Woodland	4	81,301	74	2,144,006
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper- Pinyon Woodland	3	61,701	18	358,536

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of ten major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

<u>Population Centers</u>	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria-Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
San Diego	15	1,043,680	100	3,378,814
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463



3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of six BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness area is Domeland, managed by the Sequoia National Forest, twenty miles to the north of the WSA.

#### C. Manageability

The Kelso Peak WSA is manageable as wilderness. However, there are several issues which complicate manageability and threaten the ability to maintain wilderness values in the long-term.

A vehicle route which was not identified in the wilderness inventory enters the WSA from the eastern side and continues all the way through the area exiting at the western boundary. This route cuts the WSA in half and provides vehicular access into other portions of the WSA potentially causing manageability problems. The route is used by recreationists for access into this area and into the Sequoia National Forest. Patterns of motorized vehicular access are well developed within the WSA.

The private land pattern within the northern portion of the WSA could have a drastic effect on the manageability of the area. Private land comprises approximately one-fourth of the WSA. If this land was to be developed into housing or some other form of use which was not compatible with wilderness, significant adverse impacts would occur to the wilderness values of the area. Along the eastern boundary are houses and ranchettes. These activities do not meld well with wilderness values within the WSA and cause a loss of solitude, and primitive recreation along and near the boundary of the WSA. The area's relatively small size is also a limiting factor for manageability of the area.

Ten mining claims were filed in the WSA since 1979. Although mineral potential is considered low, if any of the claims prove valid, development would create site-specific manageability problems.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

#### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The Kelso Peak WSA is within the BLM Jawbone Canyon Geology-Energy-Mineral (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M resource data in the wilderness section of the CDCA plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III), in 1980 was not fully analyzed, integrated and interpreted at the time of the suitability recommendation. The WSA was not evaluated for mineral resource potential due to lack of sufficient data. However, the 1980 G-E-M narrative in the EIS stated, that based solely on a limited amount



of data, the eastern one-half of the WSA had a possible potential for uranium. As of December 12, 1979, five unpatented mining claims located in the WSA were recorded with the BLM.

BLM GRA data files did not classify the WSA for mineral occurrence potential.

2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should be Considered in the Final Recommendation: No U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) or U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral surveys were conducted in the WSA because it is recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation. No additional data is available as of January, 1988.

Because the WSA exhibits only a low potential for any mineral resources a mineral potential map was not prepared for this report.

Unpatented mining claims in the WSA are summarized in the following table taken from BLM records dated December, 1987.

Table 4 Mining Claims

TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
MINING CLAIM						
Lode	N/A	12	12	N/A	240	240
Placer	N/A	3	3	N/A	120	120
Mill Site	N/A	0	0	N/A	0	0
Total	N/A	15	15	N/A	360	360

E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Wilderness values will suffer adverse impacts due to the continued use of vehicle routes within the WSA. Mineral development, if it occurs, will cause localized adverse impacts to wilderness values.
2. Impact on Locatable Mineral Exploration and Development: Opportunities for exploration and development will continue to be available within the area, subject to regulations stated in 43 CFR 3809 regarding surface disturbance, as well as any additional constraints stated in the CDCA Plan.
3. Impact on Motorized Recreation: Opportunities for motorized recreation on designated routes will continue to be available within the area.
4. Impact on Native American Values: Opportunities for access by Native Americans will not be hindered by the proposed action. Traditional plant and pinyon gathering areas will remain accessible by motorized vehicles.



5. Impact on the ACEC: There will be no impact on the ACEC. Management guidelines will continue to be implemented to minimize conflicts between resources and use.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: The comments received supported the findings.
2. Study Phase: Of the four comments received on this WSA, all favored wilderness designation. They mentioned the area's primitive character, spectacular scenery, and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. It was noted that a combination of WSA 160B with adjacent USFS land on the west and non-CDCA roadless land on the north would make a contiguous block of potential wilderness; for this reason the area should be given further study. Also mentioned were the unique flora and fauna at varying elevations within the WSA and the closeness of the area to the Pacific Crest Trail.

One respondent suggested the exclusion of private land in the eastern portion and the rehabilitation of areas impacted by motorized vehicles.

One comment received in response to the Public Input Workbook (3/15/79) noted that the area's best use would not be as wilderness and that the impacts of adjacent use destroys the wilderness values.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: Few public comments specific to this WSA were received in response to the Draft Plan Alternatives. However, this WSA was one of those opposed by the National Outdoor coalition, a coalition of mining, rockhounding and off-highway vehicle groups. A large number of club members sent in printed coupons supporting a multiple use designation of moderate use for this area; this designation was offered by the Use Alternative. Conservation organizations supported the Protection Alternative which recommended wilderness for the WSA.



4. Proposed Plan: Motorized vehicular organizations and conservation groups maintained the same positions stated for the Draft Alternatives.

No comments were received from local governments.



# **Skinner Peak**

*CDCA 160C*







## SKINNER PEAK WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-160C)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA ---

2,058 acres

The Skinner Peak WSA is located in Kern County along the west-central border of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The community of Ridgecrest is 30 miles to the east. The WSA includes 1,586 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and 472 acres of private land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northwestern border of the WSA is the administrative boundary of the CDCA. The Sequoia National Forest borders to the north and the east. The southern border is the Bird Springs Canyon Road. Kelso Valley Road forms the southwestern boundary.

The WSA was included for further consideration during the planning process because it adjoined an area in the Sequoia National Forest that was being evaluated for potential wilderness designation.

Steep bajadas dominate the area with elevations of 3,500 to 5,200 feet. Vegetation in the lower elevations include creosote, yucca, cholla, desert shrubs, and some Joshua trees. Upper elevations contain scattered desert shrubs and some juniper in the eastern portion.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced, and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0 acres recommended for wilderness

1,586 BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for the Skinner Peak WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. Future activities in the area will be controlled by low intensity management as prescribed in the CDCA Plan. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan.



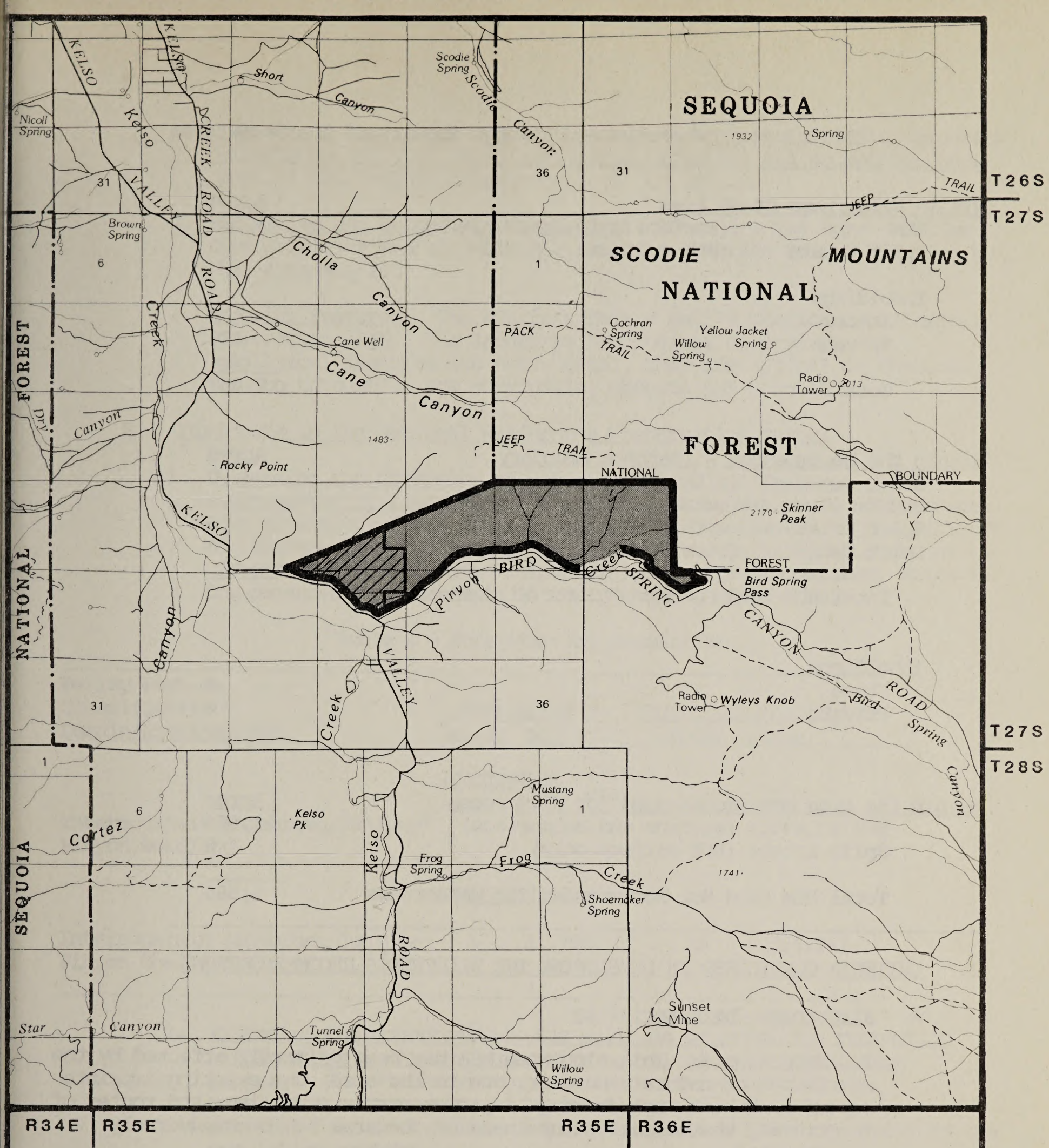
The wilderness values in the Skinner Peak WSA do not stand on their own merit. The WSA was originally delineated during development of the CDCA Plan as a natural extension of an area being considered for wilderness in the adjacent Sequoia National Forest. It was recognized, however, that the WSA is not manageable as wilderness unless the adjacent area in the Forest was also designated wilderness. The adjacent area in the Sequoia National Forest was not designated wilderness.

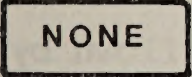
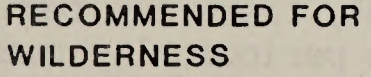


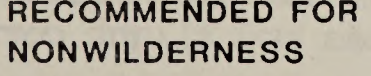
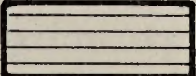

Designation of the area as wilderness would not contribute any additional unique or distinct features to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Other WSAs in the California Desert that are recommended suitable offer a much more extensive and diverse representation of desert wilderness values. There are approximately seven miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.

The wildlife and vegetative resources within the area are typical of the surrounding desert. The area contains no unusual plants or State or Federally listed threatened or endangered plant or animal species. The entire WSA is within the Rudnick Grazing Allotment and is within traditional Native American collection areas.

Without the adjacent Forest Service area, the WSA is not manageable as wilderness. The western quarter of this WSA contains several parcels of private land. There are few opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined types of recreation. Naturalness is impacted by range improvements, a three strand powerline that traverses the southwestern portion of the area, and several well defined historic routes of travel. The area's scenic qualities are marginal.





- |   |  |   |                                   |   |                     |
|---|--|---|-----------------------------------|---|---------------------|
|  | <b>NONE</b>  |  | <b>RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS</b> |  | <b>SPLIT ESTATE</b> |
|  | <b>RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS</b>               |  | <b>STATE</b>                      |  | <b>PRIVATE</b>      |
|  | <b>LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS</b> |   |                                   |   |                     |

**Skinner Peak Proposal**  
**MAP-1**

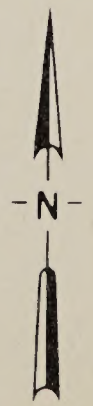
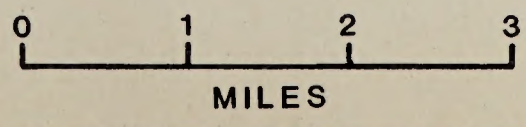




TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	1,586
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		472
Total		<u>2,058</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	1,586
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>1,586</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: This elongated WSA has been primarily affected by the forces of nature. However, due to the size, the existing imprints of man which include range improvements, a powerline, and routes of travel, the overall naturalness of the area has been adversely impacted.
2. Solitude: Because of the size of the WSA, there are few opportunities for solitude. This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors.



The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: There are few opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation in the WSA, due to the area's size.
4. Special Features: The WSA is within a Native American traditional collection area. The landforms, ecological diversity, and geological features are not unusual, they are typical of features common throughout the surrounding deserts and mountains.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: The Skinner Peak WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The WSA contains 1,586 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland ecosystem, which is represented by other WSAs in the CDCA that are suitable.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	4	81,301	74	2,149,717
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	3	61,701	18	364,247

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of ten major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.



Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

<u>Population Centers</u>	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria-Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
San Diego	15	1,043,680	100	3,378,814
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of eight BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness area is Domeland Wilderness, administered by Sequoia National Forest, ten miles north of the WSA.

#### C. Manageability

Without the addition of the adjacent Forest Service study area, the Skinner Peak WSA is not manageable as wilderness. The wilderness values that are present do not stand on their own merit.

Overall, the long narrow WSA has few quality wilderness values. It is less than one mile in width at its widest point. There are few opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation and the lack of topographic diversity virtually eliminates any opportunities for solitude. A three strand powerline and associated right-of-way traverses the southwest portion of the WSA. Numerous range improvements dating from pre-1979 are also contained within the WSA. They require regular maintenance and inspection. Several well-used routes of travel also provide access into the adjacent Sequoia National Forest.

Approximately one-quarter of the WSA is non public-lands. Any development or uses of these lands will very likely not be compatible with wilderness management.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.



#### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The Skinner Peak WSA is located in the BLM Jawbone Canyon Geology-Energy-Mineral (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). The BLM G-E-M narrative in the wilderness section of the CDCA plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) was not fully analyzed, integrated and interpreted at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation. However, the EIS G-E-M narrative stated that the WSA has potential for uranium in the western part of the WSA. As of December 12, 1979, there were no unpatented mining claims located in the WSA on record with the BLM.

The 1980 BLM GRA file data supports the G-E-M statement in the 1980 CDCA EIS for the occurrence potential of uranium in the western one-third of the WSA. The 1980 BLM GRA file documented a uranium occurrence in a prospect located on Pinyon Creek in the western part of the WSA. Based on the BLM classification system, this area has a low potential for the occurrence of uranium. The WSA was not evaluated for mineral resource potential of other locatable, saleable and leasable minerals due to lack of sufficient data.

A map of the mineral resource potentials was not prepared for this report because there are no known potentials for moderate or high levels of mineral resources.

2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should be Considered in the Final Recommendation: No U.S. Geological Survey or U.S. Bureau of Mines mineral survey was completed for this WSA because it is recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation. As of February, 1988, there were no unpatented mining claims in the WSA on record with the BLM.

#### E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Development of the private land, maintenance of the powerline and range improvements, and continued use of the existing routes of travel will adversely impact the area's naturalness. The area has few opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation.
2. Impact on Native American Concerns: Historic methods of access will continue to be available for access to Native American collection sites.
3. Impact on Minerals and Energy: Opportunities for exploration and development of minerals and energy will continue to be available subject to applicable laws, regulations and the low intensity management guidelines established in the CDCA Plan.



4. Impact on Livestock Management: Opportunities will continue to be available for maintenance and development of new range improvements to better manage livestock to utilize the forage produced on the public lands.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: Very few comments were received; the majority of them stated that this area was under 5,000 acres in size. However, this unit is adjacent to a USFS RARE II area.
2. Study Phase: Of the six comments received on this WSA, four opposed wilderness designation. The small size of the unit was the major reason for opposition. One of these respondents, a mining association, generally opposed all areas of less than 5000 acres because of the impact on the mineral industry. Another writer stated that heavy grazing had spoiled the primitive characteristics of the area.

The two comments favoring wilderness noted the area's contiguity to RARE II lands and the Pacific Crest Trail.

3. Draft Plan Alternative: Few public comments specific to this WSA were received in response to the Draft Plan Alternatives. However, this WSA was one of those opposed by the National Outdoor Coalition (NOC), a coalition of mining, rockhounding, and off-highway vehicle groups. A large number of club members sent in printed coupons supporting a multiple use designation of "moderate use" for this area; this designation was offered by the Use Alternative. Conservation organizations supported the Protection Alternative which recommended wilderness for this WSA.
4. Proposed Plan: Conservation organizations and vehicle-oriented recreation groups maintained the same position stated for the Draft Plan Alternatives.

No comments were received from local governments.



# **Frog Creek**

*CDCA 163*







## FROG CREEK WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-163)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA ---

10,481 acres

The Frog Creek WSA is located in Kern County within the northwest portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The community of Ridgecrest is 28 miles to the east. The WSA includes 10,399 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and 82 acres of private land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern border of the WSA follows Bird Springs Canyon Road with the exception of the road and radio towers on Wyleys Knob that are cherrystemmed. The 4000-foot contour elevation in Kelso Valley forms the western border and the southern border is a road through Frog Creek drainage. The east border follows contour elevations between 4300 and 4400 feet.

The WSA consists of an uplifted mountainous region of the southern Sierra Nevada Range which is continuous with the mountains extending to Tehachapi Pass. The western, northern, and eastern portions of the WSA include the edges of several valleys. The elevations range between 4000 to 6200 feet. Dense clusters of Joshua trees are the predominant vegetation of the valley areas. The mountain slopes are covered with sage brush, while the upper reaches have scattered stands of pinyon and juniper. The entire WSA is within the Jawbone/Butterbrecht Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced, and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0	acres recommended for wilderness
10,399	BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for the Frog Creek WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. Future activities in the area will be controlled by low intensity, multiple use management as prescribed in the CDCA Plan. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan and further explained in the California Wilderness Study Overview.



While the WSA did meet the criteria of wilderness as defined in section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964, further studies made as part of the California Desert Plan determined that the area's value for wilderness did not exceed the potential for other types of uses including vehicle dependant recreation, grazing, and mineral development. Designation of the area as wilderness would not contribute any additional unique or distinct features to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Other WSAs in the Californian Desert that are recommended suitable offer a much more extensive and diverse representation of desert wilderness values.

The area is utilized for both vehicle dependant and primitive types of recreation. The primary use within this WSA includes motorcycle trail riding, hunting, and to a lesser extent, four-wheel drive vehicle touring. There are many traditional routes of travel through, and into the area. There are approximately ten miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use. Good hunting opportunities are available for quail, dove, and rabbit. The eastern edge of the area is crossed by the Pacific Crest Trail which is a National Scenic Trail.

The entire WSA is within the Rudnick Grazing Allotment which existed before 1979. It has a year-round season of use. There are several range improvements, including stock watering facilities within the WSA. No cultural resources are known to exist in the WSA. This area was traditionally used by the Kawaiisu Indians for collecting pinyon nuts.

The northwest portion of the WSA has moderate potential for uranium. Potential for other minerals is largely unknown. Eight mining claims encumber 220 acres of the WSA. The majority of these claims are not within the area identified as having mineral potential. This fact supports the contention by local miners that other portions of the area contain potential for mineralization.


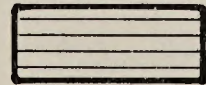
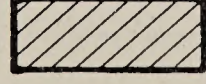
The scenic values in the WSA are ordinary. The cherrystemmed communications tower, in the north central portion of the area, is visible throughout most of the WSA. The wildlife and vegetative resources within the WSA and surrounding area are already managed and protected under the prescriptions in the Jawbone/Butterbrecht ACEC Plan. The WSA contains no unusual plants or Federally listed threatened or endangered plant or animal species. Portions of the WSA fall within the range of the Mohave ground squirrel, a State listed threatened species.

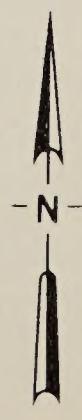
The WSA would be best managed and maintained under nonwilderness and low intensity management guidelines as prescribed in the CDCA Plan. Motorized vehicle travel on designated routes of travel will not sacrifice the quality of the other resource values that are present in the WSA.





- |   |   |                            |
|---|---|----------------------------|
|  | NONE  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |                            |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |                            |

- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
|  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | STATE        |
|  | PRIVATE      |



**Frog Creek  
Proposal  
MAP-1**

0 1 2 3  
MILES

CDCA-163  
JUNE, 1988



TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	10,399
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		82
Total		<u>10,481</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	10,399
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>10,399</u>

### 3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

#### A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The area has been affected primarily by the natural forces of nature. However, it contains structures such as stock watering facilities and vehicle ways which cross through the mountainous area as well as provide access to the private inholding. Evidence of off-highway vehicle use also affects the eastern bajada which descends to Indian Wells Valley. The scenic values in the area are considered to be of marginal quality.



2. Solitude: The mountainous terrain does provide opportunities for solitude within the Frog Creek WSA. However, existing access routes, and the cherrystemmed microwave tower which is visible from virtually every part of the WSA, and are a constant reminder of man's presence.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation are somewhat restricted because of the existing routes of travel, and the access route to the private land which bisects the WSA. The Pacific Crest Trail passes north-south through the east central part of the WSA.
4. Special Features: The entire WSA is within the Jawbone/Butterbrecht ACEC. The ACEC management plan controls and directs uses in the area to protect sensitive plant and wildlife values. The range of the State listed threatened Mohave ground squirrel overlaps portions of the WSA.

#### B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: The Frog Creek WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The WSA contains 10,399 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush Province/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland ecosystem, which is represented in other BLM WSAs that are recommended suitable and in areas that are currently designated as wilderness.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

<u>Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV</u>	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	4	81,301	74	2,140,904
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	3	61,701	18	355,434



2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of ten major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

<u>Population Centers</u> <u>California</u>	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria-Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
San Diego	15	1,043,680	100	3,378,814
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of eight BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness area is Domeland Wilderness, administered by Sequoia National Forest, ten miles north of the WSA.

#### C. Manageability

The Frog Creek WSA is manageable as wilderness. However, several issues have a potential to complicate the ability to maintain the wilderness values.

The eastern and western boundaries do not follow features discernable on the ground. Extensive signing and boundary patrols would be necessary to redirect the traditional vehicle dependant recreation use that occurs in the area.

Portions of the area contain known energy values. Full-scale development of any of valid mining claims has a high potential to impact wilderness values in portions of the entire WSA. Access requirements for such development would result in similar impacts.



Any development, and continued access to the private inholding will also reduce the ability to maintain natural values in the WSA.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The Frog Creek WSA is in the BLM Jawbone Canyon Geology-Energy-Mineral (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M data in the wilderness section of the CDCA Plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) stated that mineral resource data had not been fully analyzed, integrated, and interpreted at the time of the preliminary recommendation process. However, the EIS did state that the WSA had potential for uranium deposits based on past producers identified in the area. As of December 12, 1979, there were seven unpatented mining claims on record with the BLM in the WSA.

The WSA was not classified for mineral potential due to lack of sufficient data. BLM GRA file data supports the EIS statement for the occurrence of uranium in the northeastern portion of the WSA. This was based on favorable geology and documented occurrences.

Uranium mineral occurrences were identified in Mines and Mineral Resources of Kern County, California (Troxel, B., and Morton, P. K., 1962, California Division of Mines and Geology (CDMG), County Report 1, p. 327). The report indicated that uranium deposits within this portion of the Sierra Nevada Mountains are found in metasedimentary rocks, occurring as roof pendants in the granitic terrain. (Troxel and Morton, 1962, pp. 339, 340). The occurrences in the WSA are in the metasedimentary rocks of the Kernville Formation, located immediately adjacent to the WSA north of Bird Springs Pass Road, and within the WSA south of Bird Springs Pass Road. The CDMG report identified the northerly Kervin prospect, which was sampled by the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission in 1955, as containing 0.11 percent uranium oxide. The southern Lucky Seven prospect, consisting of six unpatented mining claims (1962) and located in the WSA, was drilled by the BOM in 1955. Based on the reported occurrences and favorable geologic environment, an area in the northwestern portion of the WSA is classified as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of uranium resources under the BLM mineral classification system.

2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which should be Considered in the Final Recommendation: No U.S. Geological Survey or U.S. Bureau of Mines mineral survey was completed for this WSA because it is recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.



Unpatented lode and placer mining claims are concentrated in the southeastern portion of the WSA. An unpatented lode mining claim is also located in the northwestern portion of the WSA. Unpatented mining claims in the WSA are summarized in the following table taken from BLM records dated December, 1987.

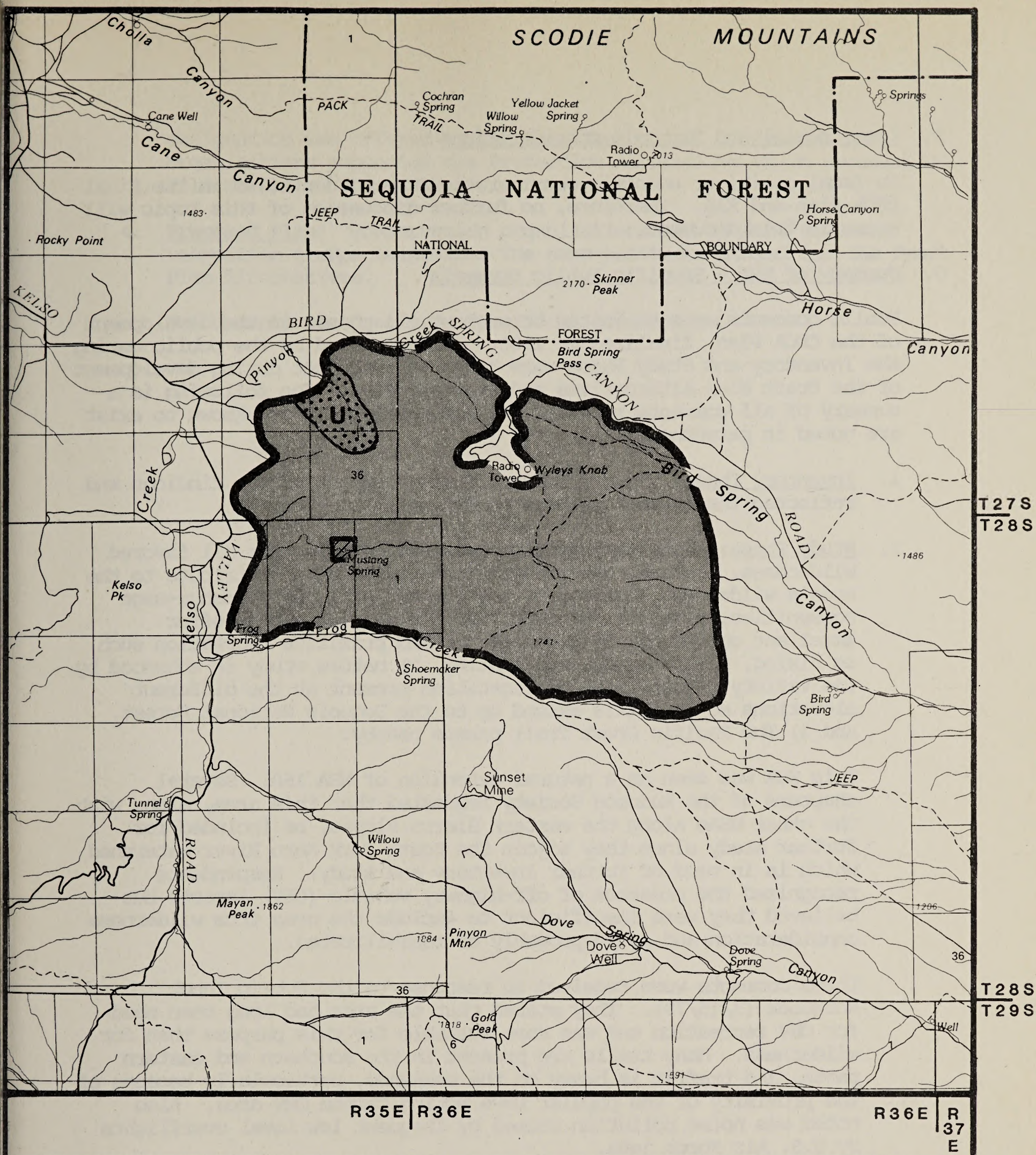
Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
MINING CLAIM						
Lode	N/A	5	5	N/A	100	100
Placer	N/A	3	3	N/A	120	120
Mill Site	N/A	0	0	N/A	0	0
Total	N/A	8	8	N/A	220	220

E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Noise, surface disturbance and access requirements for any mineral and energy exploration and development will negatively impact naturalness, solitude, and primitive and unconfined types of recreation. Continued use of the WSA by vehicle dependant recreationists will negatively impact opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation. Overall naturalness should not be adversely impacted because travel is limited to existing routes of travel. Any additional range improvements for livestock management will also adversely impact wilderness values.
2. Impact on Minerals and Energy: Opportunities for exploration and development of minerals and energy will continue to be available subject to applicable laws, regulations and the low intensity management guidelines established in the CDCA Plan.
3. Impact on Pacific Crest Trail: Continued use of the trail will not be impacted. Opportunities will be available for use of mechanized equipment to maintain the trail to the appropriate standards.
4. Impact on Jawbone/Butterbrecht ACEC and Wildlife Habitat: Habitat will continue to be protected and opportunities will be available for the use of mechanized equipment for habitat improvement projects.
5. Impact on Vehicle Dependant Recreation: Opportunities will continue to be available to travel on existing routes of travel.
6. Impact on Livestock Management: Maintenance and development of range improvements to maximize livestock management opportunities will continue to be available without constraints on the use of mechanized equipment.
7. Impact on Native American Concerns: Opportunities will continue to be available for traditional access to harvest pinyon nuts.





NONE

Recommended for Wilderness

Recommended for Non Wilderness

Recommended for Non Wilderness

Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness

Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness

Split Estate

Split Estate

State

State

Private

Private

### Explanation

High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals

High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals

Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals

Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals

M

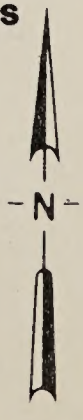
Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area

H

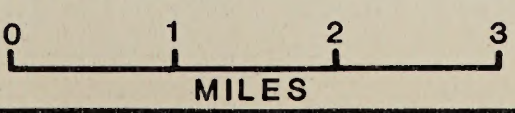
High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area

### Commodity Symbols

U Uranium



**Frog Creek  
Mineral Resource Potential**



**MAP-2  
CDCA-163**



F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: Most comments received supported the findings and reflected the overall natural condition.
2. Study Phase: Nine respondents commented on this WSA; all favored wilderness. Several characteristics were said to contribute to the area's wilderness quality; 1) the rounded hills with Joshua-sage communities, granitic outcrops, and pinyon pine stands offer excellent opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation such as hiking, nature study, and hunting, 2) nature study is enhanced by the variety of wildlife and vegetation present at the different elevations as the hills extend up to the Sequoia National Forest, and 3) The Pacific Crest Trail passes nearby.

This WSA was seen as a natural extension of WSA 160. Several chapters of the Audubon Society requested that this area, along with the other WSAs along the eastern Sierra slopes, be included for further study since they adjoin the South Fork Kern River watershed which is in need of further inventory and study. Respondents recognized the presence of off-highway vehicle (OHV) impacts but believed they were insufficient to exclude the area from wilderness consideration and could probably be rehabilitated.

Three comments were received in response to the Public Input Workbook (3/15/79). They stated that the area had long been used for OHV recreation and was more suitable for this purpose than for wilderness. Many trails are present in the southern and eastern parts, and traffic is heavy on the weekends, particularly because of the proximity of the popular Dove Spring Canyon OHV area. Also noted was noise pollution caused by frequent low level overflights by U.S. Air Force jets.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: Few public comments specific to this WSA were received in response to the Draft Plan Alternatives. However, this WSA was one of those opposed by the National Outdoor Coalition, a coalition of mining, rockhounding, and OHV groups. A large number of club members sent in printed coupons and letters supporting a multiple use designation of "moderate use" for this area; this



designation was offered by the Use Alternative. Conservation organizations supported the Protection Alternative which recommended wilderness for this WSA.

4. Proposed Plan: Conservation organizations and vehicle oriented recreation groups maintained the same positions stated for the Draft Plan Alternatives.

No comments were received from local governments.







# **El Paso Mountains**

*CDCA 164*







## EL PASO MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-164)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA ---

22,243 acres

The El Paso Mountains WSA is located in Kern County in the west central portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). Ridgecrest, located approximately ten miles northeast, is the closest community. The WSA includes 20,674 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and 1,569 acres of private lands (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA is bounded on all sides by roads. To the west, the boundary follows the Red Rock-Inyokern Road. Along this boundary, one vehicle route, penetrating roughly two miles into the Black Hills, has been cherrystemmed out of the WSA. The northern boundary is delineated by dirt roads that tend to follow Freeman Gulch and Little Dixie Wash. The eastern boundary follows a road that bisects the El Paso Mountains to Goler Gulch. To the south, the boundary again follows dirt roads which proceed past Mormon Gulch, Mormon Flat, Apache Mine, Mesquite Canyon, and Boulder and Bonanza Gulches until intersecting with the Red Rock-Inyokern Road.

The diverse terrain found within this area consists of numerous reddish colored buttes and uplifted volcanic mesas. These slopes are dissected by many narrow canyons creating a badlands topography. Elevations range from 5,244 feet on Black Mountain to around 2,800 feet in the northwestern portion of the WSA. The primary plant community represented is the creosote bush scrub, although the various exposures of the mountains provide a great variety in vegetation. The western side of the mountain contains many Joshua trees.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced, and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE -----

13,986	acres recommended for wilderness
6,688	BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

Partial wilderness (62% suitable) is the recommendation for this WSA. The 6,688 acres in this WSA recommended nonsuitable are released for uses other than wilderness. The bulk of the suitable area consists of public land. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.



The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan and further explained in the California Wilderness Study Overview.

A portion of this WSA is recommended for wilderness designation because it exemplifies outstanding wilderness qualities and possesses some significant special features that would benefit from the protective aspect of wilderness. Within the suitable area, the forces of nature remain the primary influence. Within this natural area, opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation abound. The rugged topography of the mesas, the badlands labyrinth, and to a lesser extent, the vegetation, create numerous pockets of seclusion within the study area. The diversity of terrain provides for a variety of recreational opportunities, offering a range of challenges to accommodate all experience levels. Because wilderness values are so significant, the suitability recommendation will preclude any further vehicular use of approximately five miles of primitive access routes of travel.

The area contains several special features, the most notable of which are the national register quality archaeological sites throughout the area. A portion of the WSA is within the Last Chance Archaeological District and is on the National Register of Historic Places. This area is also considered prime habitat for raptors. A more thorough discussion of these special features is included in the Wilderness Characteristics section.

Within this WSA, there are few resources that would conflict with wilderness designation. The area is covered by the Cantil Common Grazing Allotment. Depending on forage, approximately 35,000 head of sheep graze the area between March and May. Existing range improvements within this WSA are minor and, according to the allotment management plan, no additional projects are planned. A few mining claims are located within the suitable portion of this WSA, however, only a single small area of moderate potential for the occurrence of mineral resources has been identified along the southern boundary of the WSA. No mineral resource development is expected to occur within the area recommended for wilderness designation.

The remaining acreage in this study area is not recommended for wilderness designation because (1) in this area, naturalness has been reduced by man's previous activities, and (2) this portion possesses areas classified as having moderate potential for the occurrence of gold, silver, tungsten and copper.

The lower lying areas with gentler topography have suffered adverse impacts from the passage of vehicles, decreasing the perception of naturalness. This use has sporadically occurred for many, many years, resulting in a network of ways. Most use has been generated by interest in the area's mineral potential. There are approximately 17 miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA.



Three areas within the nonsuitable portion of this WSA have been identified as having moderate potential for the occurrence of gold, silver, tungsten and copper. The area also contains two oil and gas leases. Should development of these resources occur, the impacts would be detrimental to wilderness values.

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	20,674
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		1,569
Total		<u>22,243</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	13,986
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>13,986</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	6,688
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>6,688</u>

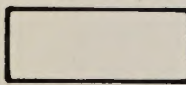


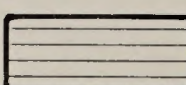

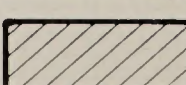


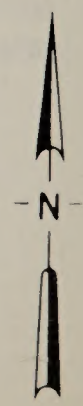


T27S  
T28S

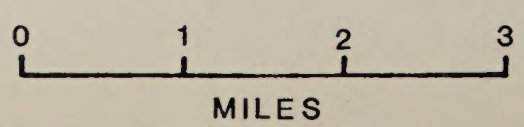
T28S  
T29S

R38E R38E R39E

- |   |   |  |              |
|---|---|--|--------------|
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS                  |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |  | STATE        |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | PRIVATE      |



**El Paso Mountains  
Proposal  
MAP-1**



CDCA-164  
JUNE, 1988



3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The area contains very few minor imprints of man and, as a whole, is primarily affected by the forces of nature. Various trails and ways, maintained only by the occasional passage of vehicles, can be found along the outer reaches of the WSA, in the nonsuitable areas. Along the southern boundary, there are a few sporadically active mines, all small operations. They are not, however, substantially noticeable. In 1979, a vehicle closure, an effort to protect sensitive cultural resources, was affected in portions of this WSA. This closure, coupled with rough terrain, have helped to maintain the primitive character of the heart of the WSA, the suitable area. As part of their wildlife habitat improvement efforts, the California Department of Fish and Game, in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management, constructed wildlife guzzlers in the El Paso Mountains area prior to WSA status. Ten guzzlers are located within the WSA. These structures are unobtrusive and are substantially unnoticeable.
2. Solitude: The badlands topography and, to a limited extent, the variety of vegetation provide extensive screening. However, the area is relatively small and therefore, is able to accommodate only a limited number of visitors.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The rugged diverse terrain enhances and encourages primitive forms of recreation. Here, excellent challenges are offered to a myriad of recreationists.
4. Special Features: The El Paso Mountains WSA contains the most abundant, sensitive and significant concentration of prehistoric archaeological sites in the El Paso Mountain range. The range of archaeological sites portrays a variety of human activities: extensive village sites with numerous house rings and midden deposits, open air temporary campsites and rock shelters, special food gathering and processing sites, quarries where local lithic material was extracted, work areas where stone tools were manufactured, and numerous petroglyphs and rock alignments. Study of this area has added significantly to our knowledge of local and regional prehistory. In fact, the area's significance has been nationally recognized as part of the Last Chance Canyon Archaeological District, placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971.



A portion of the El Paso Raptor Management Area is within this WSA. This is one of the densest known breeding areas for golden eagles, prairie falcons, and other raptor species in the CDCA.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 20,674 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland ecosystem. This WSA is somewhat unique because it is located at the southwest margin of the Basin and Range physiographic province. This province is separated from the Mojave Desert province by the Garlock fault, located eight miles south of the El Paso Mountains.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

<u>Bailey-Kuchler</u> <u>Classification</u> <u>Domain/Province/PNV</u>	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	4	61,701	74	2,130,629
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	3	61,701	18	345,159

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of eleven major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.



Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

<u>Population Centers</u>	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria-Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
San Diego	15	1,043,680	100	3,378,814
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of four BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness area is Domeland Wilderness, managed by The Sequoia National Forest, located 30 miles west.

#### C. Manageability

The El Paso Mountains WSA is manageable as wilderness. There are a few issues, however, that would complicate management.

The suitable area boundary is delineated by roads for nearly one-quarter of its length. The remaining boundary is defined only by topography and private land. Some signing will be necessary, however, the existing closed area roughly matches the suitable boundary, so only a few additional signs will be needed to adequately mark this boundary.

No private inholdings are found within the suitable area. As of December, 1987, there were ten mining claims located in the suitable portion of the WSA. Should any of these claims be developed, they most likely would impact manageability of the area. The area also is included in the Cantil Common Grazing Allotment. Since grazing is grandfathered, existing use will be allowed to continue. This activity will have only limited impacts on manageability since use is seasonal and improvements are few.



The nonsuitable area has a more manageable boundary because it is more easily discernible, but previous activities in this area have involved extensive use of motorized vehicles. Intrusions by vehicles may be hard to curb without extensive signing.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The El Paso Mountains WSA is located in the BLM El Paso Mountains Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M resource data in the wilderness section of the CDCA plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) in 1980 had not been fully analyzed, integrated, and interpreted at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation. However, the EIS G-E-M narrative in 1980 stated that the WSA has possible potential for metals, uranium, pumice, bentonite, sand, gravel, sodium, oil and gas. As of December 12, 1979, approximately 10 unpatented mining claims were recorded with the BLM in the WSA.

The 1980 BLM GRA file contains a limited amount of information that supports the EIS G-E-M statement. However, the data from the 1980 BLM file was incomplete, and no assessment of potential was made for the occurrence of mineral resources.

Known gold and copper occurrences in the southern portion of the WSA near Mesa Spring were documented by the 1980 BLM GRA file. In addition, the file data also documented occurrences of pumicite in the central portion of the WSA and sand and gravel sites outside of and immediately adjacent to the northern and western boundary of the WSA.

The 1980 BLM GRA file documented a U.S. Geological Survey (USGS, Conservation Division, 1979) classification of the western two-thirds of the WSA as prospectively valuable for sodium and potassium and 90% of the WSA as prospectively valuable for oil and gas.

2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should Be Considered in the Final Recommendation: The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) conducted independent mineral surveys of the portion of the WSA recommended suitable for wilderness designation in 1982 and 1983, respectively. The results of the BOM survey (1984, MLA 40-84) and USGS survey were incorporated into a combined report (USGS Bulletin 1708-C) and published in 1985. The following summarizes the results of the combined report.



Mines and prospects in the southern portion of the WSA recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation are encompassed by the Goler Gold Mining District. The Goler District is attributed with over \$50,000 in gold production, equating to approximately 2,500 ounces, mined intermittently in 1893, 1900, and during the 1930's. However, no active mines, prospects or mineral resources were identified in the combined USGS/BOM report. The mineral surveys identified a zone of silica rich sedimentary rocks outcropping in the southwestern portion and the central "suitable portion" of the WSA. Based on geochemical anomalies, the USGS classified the areas in the suitable portion of the WSA as having a low potential for the occurrence of gold. The USGS did not classify the southern Bonanza Gulch area for placer gold occurrence. However, the USGS stated that gold is probably widely disseminated in low concentrations throughout the lower conglomerate unit of the Bonanza Gulch Formation.

In addition, the USGS and BOM combined report noted the existence of perlite, pumicite, crushed rock resources, sand and gravel within the WSA which may be suitable for use in industrial mineral applications. The report stated that the development of these materials is unlikely in the near future due to the high cost of mining and transportation to the market areas. Therefore, this resource is classified as having low potential for occurrence.

BOM identified a zone of siliceous rocks in the western portion of the WSA. One outcrop outside the suitable portion boundary, in the west-central portion of the WSA, was sampled by the BOM. Sample results indicated anomalous gold, silver, and tungsten values. Based on favorable geologic environment and anomalous geochemical values, this area in the western portion of the WSA is classified under the BLM classification system as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of gold, silver and tungsten resources. Map 2 illustrates the mineral occurrence potential areas. An area of copper prospects located in the southern portion of the WSA was identified in the 1980 GRA file. According to Mines and Mineral Resources of Kern County (Troxel, B., and Morton, P.K., 1962, California Division of Mines and Geology (CDMG), County Report 1, pp. 83-84), prospects containing copper, often in association with gold, tungsten, lead, and zinc are common in the El Paso Mountains. The CDMG report described the prospects as belonging to the Iron Hat group. Based on favorable geologic environment and known mineral occurrences, this area in the southern portion of the WSA is classified under the BLM classification system as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of copper resources.

Since 1980, no exploration or mining plans of operation have been filed with the BLM for the WSA. However, active exploration, development and production from gold operations in Bonanza Gulch, immediately adjacent to the southern WSA boundary is currently occurring. The activities primarily are concentrated in the lower conglomerate member of the Bonanza Gulch Formation described as



occurring in the WSA in the USGS and BOM report. Under the BLM classification system, the area in the southwestern portions of the WSA underlain with the favorable conglomerate member of the Bonanza Gulch Formation is considered as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of placer gold resources.

Unpatented mining claims and oil and gas leases are concentrated in the western half of the WSA.

There are 2 oil and gas leases with 2,445 acres in the suitable and 4,388 acres in the nonsuitable portion of the WSA.

Unpatented mining claims and leases in the WSA are summarized in the following table taken from BLM records dated December, 1987.

Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
MINING CLAIM						
Lode	10	13	23	200	260	460
Placer	0	15	15	0	600	600
Mill Site	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	10	28	38	200	860	1,060

E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Within the suitably recommended area, wilderness values will be maintained. However, development of any valid mining claims would adversely affect wilderness values in the localized area of disturbance. In the nonsuitable areas, mineral development will cause localized impacts to naturalness. These impacts will occur in the mineralized portion of the WSA, covering roughly five percent of the entire area. Opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation will be adversely impacted along designated routes of travel by the continued use of off-highway vehicles. In the nonsuitable area, approximately 12 miles of roads will remain open.
2. Impact on Cultural Resources: Those sites located within the suitable area will enjoy increased protection under the proposed action. Designation of the area will result in slight adverse impacts because study of these sites will be hampered by the restrictions placed on the use of mechanized equipment. In the nonsuitable area, those archaeological sites that are located within the mineralized portion, roughly 5% of the area, will suffer some loss. Existing Federal laws and BLM guidelines, as listed in the CDCA Plan, will lessen the rate of this loss by requiring extensive mitigation of any impacts.





T27S  
T28S

T28S  
T29S

R38E

R38E R39E

<p> Recommended for Wilderness</p> <p> Recommended for Non Wilderness</p> <p> Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness</p> <p> Split Estate</p> <p> State</p> <p> Private</p>	<p><b>Explanation</b></p> <p> High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals</p> <p> Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals</p> <p><b>M</b> Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area</p> <p><b>H</b> High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area</p>	<p><b>Commodity Symbols</b></p> <p><b>Ag</b> Silver</p> <p><b>Au</b> Gold</p> <p><b>Cu</b> Copper</p> <p><b>W</b> Tungsten</p>
--	---	--

**El Paso Mountains**  
**Mineral Resource Potential**

0 1 2 3  
MILES

**MAP-2**  
**CDCA-164**



3. Impact on Mineral Exploration and Development: The proposed action will cause only moderate adverse impacts to this activity in the suitable portion of the WSA, since less than one percent of the area is mineralized. In the nonsuitable area, exploration and development will be allowed to continue, subject to the regulations stated in 43 CFR 3809 regarding surface disturbance, as well as any additional constraints stated in the CDCA Plan.
4. Impact on Wildlife: Habitat and foraging areas for raptors will be maintained within the suitable portion of the area. In the nonsuitable area, loss of foraging area due to mineral development will be negligible. Maintenance of the existing upland game water guzzlers may be constrained by the restrictions placed on mechanized equipment in the suitable area.
5. Impact on Motorized Vehicle Opportunities: Motorized vehicle opportunities will remain unchanged. The existing vehicle closure will continue to be enforced throughout its extent. In the nonsuitable area, outside of the vehicle closure, existing roads and trails will remain open for vehicle travel.
6. Impact on Grazing: Minimal impacts will occur relative to grazing. No new improvements are planned for the portion of the allotment that coincides with the suitable area. AUM levels will remain static.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: The majority of comments referred to roads and mining activity. These locations have been reflected in the final map.
2. Study Phase: Of the 70 comments on this WSA, 50 opposed wilderness designation. Sights and sounds, such as transmission lines, low-flying aircraft, heavy mining, and recreation use, were seen by many as detracting from the area's wilderness potential. Desire for multiple uses, such as hunting, rockhounding (especially at Rainbow Ridge), four-wheel driving, biking, and camping, was repeatedly indicated. Mining potential, specifically for gold, silver, and



copper, was also commonly discussed. Others who commented, indicating a desire for access, felt that the area was not compatible with hiking, that many who wanted to sightsee or rockhound were too old to hike into the area, and that limiting access would cause increasing damage to animals and plants and discontinuance of guzzler water supply.

The comments favoring wilderness designation often mentioned the area's scenic quality and easy access from the nearby highway. The flora and fauna and archaeological sites were felt to need protection. The area is thought by some to provide psychological, historical and geological study opportunities.

Several boundary adjustments were suggested: (1) add the small section bordered on the west by Mesquite Canyon and on the east by Iron Canyon; and (2) use firmer boundaries, such as those in the El Paso MFP. Two people who commented suggested combining WSA 164 with WSA 180.

Some comments were received in response to the Public Input Workbook (3/15/79). Some opposed wilderness classification because roads exist within the area and adjacent uses would be incompatible. Some did not disagree with BLM findings but want access roads to be included for rockhounding. A few of those commenting requested that a larger area be designated as wilderness.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: The following range of public comments specific to this WSA were received in response to the Draft Desert Plan Alternatives. Some agreed with the Protection Alternative, and others agreed with the Balanced Alternative. In addition, it was expressed that the entire Wilderness Study Area should be recommended as suitable for wilderness under the Balanced Alternative.

The National Outdoor Coalition (NOC), a coalition of mining, rockhounding, and off-highway vehicle groups, recommended that this area be designated nonsuitable for wilderness. A large number of club members sent in printed coupons and letters supporting this position. Conservation oriented groups supported wilderness designation for WSA 164. Comments specific to WSA 164 mentioned the same issues discussed in the preceding paragraphs.

4. Proposed Plan: Conservation organizations and vehicle oriented recreation groups maintained the same positions stated for the Draft Plan Alternatives.

No comments were received from local governments.







# **Golden Valley**

*CDCA 170*







## GOLDEN VALLEY WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-170)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA --- 39,512 acres

Golden Valley WSA is in San Bernardino County, in the central portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The nearest city is Ridgecrest, approximately 20 miles north. The WSA includes 39,405 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administered lands, and 107 acres of private land. No State of California or split-estate lands are located within the WSA (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA is bounded on the north by an off-highway vehicle (OHV) route leading from Trona Road and trending east along an unnamed wash for approximately ten miles, until it meets the China Lake Naval Weapons Center (CLNWC) border at the Mojave "B" Range boundary. The east boundary then follows the border of CLNWC south for nine miles. The boundary trends south and then west on a maintained dirt road for approximately six miles. At this point, a cherrystemmed road juts north into the WSA for two and a half miles into Golden Valley. The boundary then continues west on a dirt road, finally following Steam Well Road until it is about one mile from Trona Road. The boundary trends north at this point and follows the lower slopes of the Lava Mountains for five miles until it meets the north boundary.

The WSA consists of two sets of mountains separated by a central valley. The Lava Mountains stretch across the northwestern two-thirds of the WSA. Crowned by Dome Mountain at 4,974 feet, the range rises an average 1,700 feet above the desert floor. The Lava Mountains are cut by several steep-walled canyons that reveal bands of multi-colored sedimentary rocks. Noted for its spring floral displays, the rolling Golden Valley lies within the south central portion of the WSA. Across Golden Valley in the southeastern portion of the WSA is Almond Mountain, which rises to 4,565 feet. Throughout the study area, vegetation consists primarily of creosote bush scrub and Joshua trees.

Less than one percent of the WSA is within the Bedrock Spring Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). This ACEC was set aside to protect prehistoric cultural resources located north of Bedrock Spring along the northern boundary of the WSA.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the CDCA Plan, protection, use, balanced and no action, and a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

Three different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EISs: all wilderness, no wilderness, and 75 percent suitable partial wilderness.



2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE — 29,195 acres recommended for wilderness  
10,292 BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

Partial wilderness (75% suitable) is the recommendation for this WSA. The 10,292 acres in this WSA recommended nonsuitable are released for uses other than wilderness. In addition to the Federal acreage recommended for wilderness, BLM recommends that 82 acres of private land be acquired through exchange or purchase with willing landowners and designated as wilderness. With acquisition of this inholding, a total of 29,195 acres are recommended for wilderness. Appendix 1 lists the inholding and provides additional information on its acquisition. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan and further explained in the California Wilderness Study Overview.

The partial suitable wilderness recommendation is based on the following rationale: (1) the recommended wilderness possesses wilderness values which far exceed the criteria specified in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964, and which overshadow the area's value for other uses, and (2) the recommended nonwilderness possesses only marginal wilderness values which do not outweigh the area's potential for energy, minerals, and motorized recreation.

The recommended wilderness portion exhibits primeval naturalness, and provides outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation. The ruggedness of the Lava Mountains and Almond Mountain have protected the area from human intrusions, and the natural surroundings appear not to have changed for hundreds of years. The deep, scenic interior canyons of the Lava Mountains provide seclusion and isolation from other visitors. The area's diverse terrain challenges the novice as well as the expert wilderness traveler. The fact that this WSA is located relatively close to a number of major southern California population centers increases the value of its high quality wilderness resources.

The recommended wilderness portion contains only isolated areas of moderate to high potential for gold, silver, lead, zinc, and tungsten. In addition, a portion of a Known Geothermal Resource Area (KGRA) extends into this part of the WSA. Based on the area's potential, it is likely that some of the many claims in the recommended wilderness area contain developable resources. Although development could result in significant cumulative adverse impacts to the wilderness values, the wilderness values are so significant that they warrant the expense of resolving these management conflicts. The suitability recommendation will preclude any further vehicular use of approximately 30 miles of primitive access routes of travel.

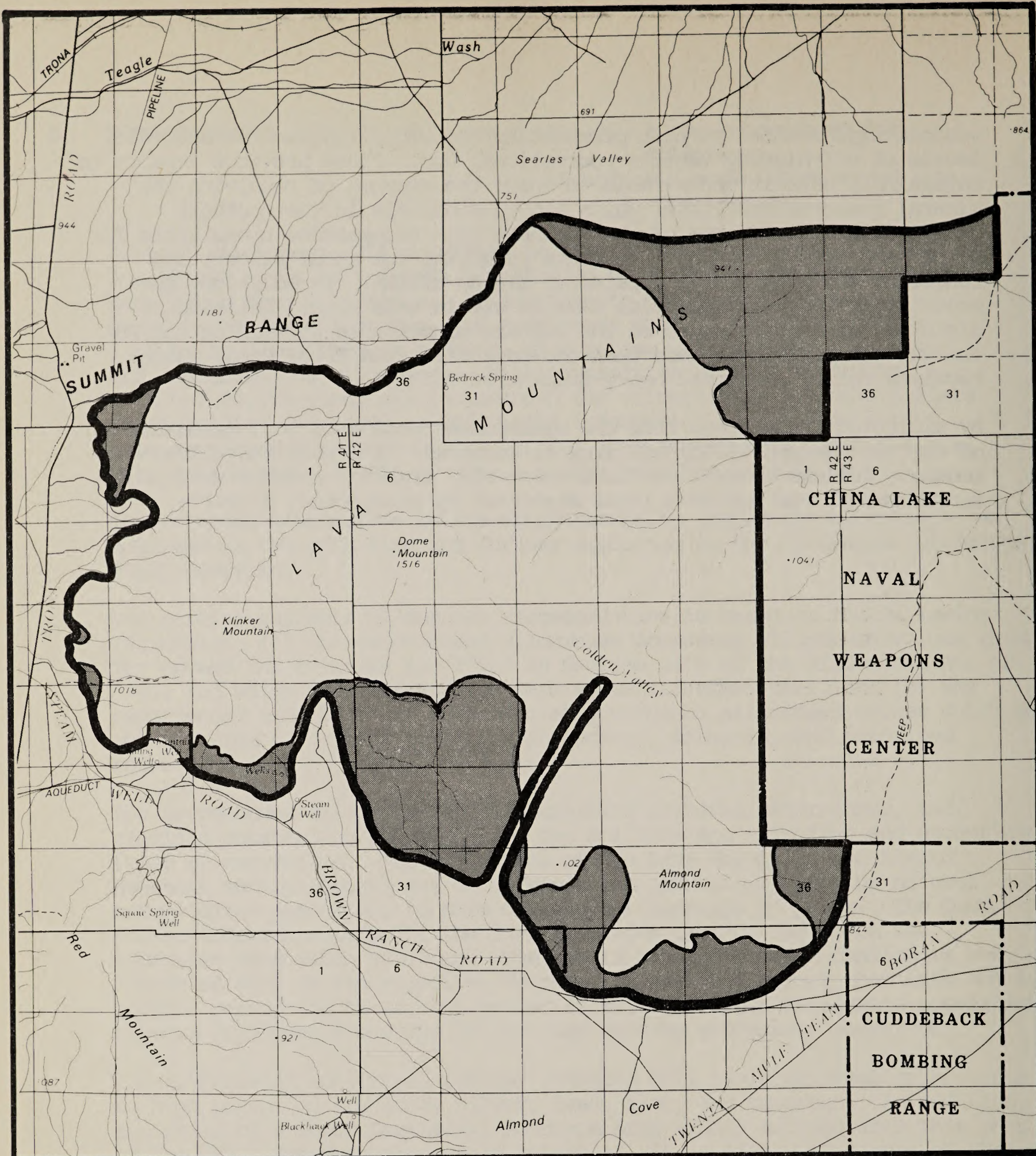
The recommended nonsuitable area is located on the northern, southern, and western fringes of the WSA. These lands contain surface disturbances and

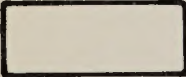





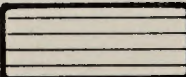
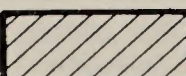
vehicle ways related to past prospecting activity, and receive moderate levels of off-highway vehicle recreational use. These previous impacts to naturalness make it undesirable to incur the expense of resolving the mineral resource conflicts, which are considerable in the southern nonsuitable area. Parts of the southern area recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation have moderate potential for gold, silver, and tungsten, and contain 193 unpatented mining claims. In addition, the majority of the high potential KGRA is within this area. Solitude is disturbed by traffic noise on the western nonsuitable portion of the WSA. The western portion is less than one-half mile from Trona Road, which receives nearly continual heavy truck traffic.

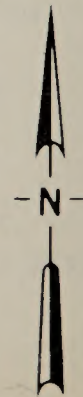
By excluding these areas from the wilderness recommendation, manageability of the recommended wilderness area is enhanced. The proposed wilderness boundary follows natural barriers which will preclude further vehicle encroachment, and excludes lands disturbed by prospecting activity.





-  RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS
-  RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS
-  LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS

-  SPLIT ESTATE
-  STATE
-  PRIVATE



**Golden Valley  
Proposal  
MAP-1**

0 1 2 3  
MILES

CDCA-170  
JUNE, 1988



TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	39,405
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	
Inholdings		
State		
Private		107
Total		<u>39,512</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	29,113
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA) <sup>1</sup>	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA) <sup>1</sup>	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>29,113</u>
Inholdings <sup>1</sup>		
State		0
Private		82
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	10,292
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>10,292</u>

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1 is a detailed description of inholdings and split estate tracts included within the study. For purposes of this report, split estate lands are defined only as those lands with Federal surface and non Federal subsurface (minerals). Lands that have Federal minerals but non Federal surface should be classified in this report by the owner of the surface estate.



3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The suitable portion of Golden Valley WSA exhibits an overall primeval character with negligible human imprints. The steep, rugged Lava Mountains and Almond Mountains with elevations ranging from 1,700 to 4,974 feet above sea level have insulated the area from acts of man.

The nonsuitable portion of the WSA has become entwined with workings of man. Mineral exploration has taken place historically, as evidenced by numerous prospect holes and other scars. Primitive mining access routes are now used by rockhounds and general recreationists who frequent the area.

2. Solitude: The suitable portion of the Golden Valley WSA provides the wilderness visitor with many opportunities for solitude. The highly dissected terrain, with its many deep canyons and washes, provides pockets of isolation. The Golden Valley portion of the WSA gives the visitor a feeling of spaciousness, with vistas of pristine mountains as a backdrop.

The nonsuitable portions of the WSA lack outstanding opportunities for solitude, because of the ample evidence of the workings of man, and noise from truck traffic on Trona Road. Solitude can be more readily found within the northern portion of the area, which contains less concentrated evidence of past human use.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The recommended wilderness area's size, ruggedness, and diversity of terrain provide a variety of opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. The two mountain ranges provide challenging hiking and backpacking with long steep-walled canyons leading up to broad ridges and benched mountain tops. Golden Valley offers the visitor an opportunity to hike unrestricted through a high desert valley surrounded by mountains. A limitation is lack of water; Bedrock Spring is the only water source within the WSA.

The quality of primitive recreation opportunities has been reduced within the nonsuitable portions of the WSA, particularly the southern portion, by the ample evidence of human use. The northern nonsuitable portion has good opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation.



4. Special Features: The WSA contains some notable prehistoric cultural resources. Bedrock Spring ACEC, at the northern edge of the study area, was a habitation site. An extensive area associated with chalcedony outcrops in Golden Valley was a quarry for ancient stone tool manufacturing.

The desert tortoise (Gopherus agassizi), under status review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for possible listing as a threatened or endangered species, occurs within the wilderness study area. The entire area is habitat for the Mohave ground squirrel (Spermophilus mohavensis), listed as Rare by the State of California.

Blooming vegetation transforms Golden Valley into a glistening sea of yellow every spring. This is one of the best floral displays in the western Mojave Desert, and is well known and much visited.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: The WSA contains 39,405 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush (Larrea) ecosystem. Although the ecosystem is common in the California Desert, this WSA's combination of low desert and high mountain environments add to the diversity of the area. The remarkable spring floral displays are unsurpassed in the California desert.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification <u>Domain/Province/PNV</u>	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,228,504
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,614,700

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of ten major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.



Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

<u>Population Centers</u>	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria-Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
San Diego	15	1,043,680	100	3,378,814
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of seven BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated area is Domelands Wilderness, 40 miles away in the Sequoia National Forest.

#### C. Manageability

The Golden Valley WSA is manageable as wilderness. Manageability of the recommended wilderness area could be greatly enhanced through acquisition of valid existing rights. Additional factors create a significant difference in ease of manageability between the portion recommended for wilderness and the portion recommended for nonwilderness.

The boundaries of the area recommended for wilderness follow physical features that make the boundary readily enforceable. As it has in the past, the area's rugged terrain will continue to protect the existing high quality wilderness values from motorized intrusions.

The southern areas recommended for nonwilderness are in more open country, where it would be more difficult to ensure against vehicular trespass. This area also contains more primitive ways than the recommended wilderness portion.

Significant portions of this WSA have moderate to high potential for gold, silver, lead, zinc, tungsten, and geothermal energy (See Energy and Mineral Resource Values). The WSA has 324 mining claims, half of which are in the recommended suitable area. In view of the area's mineral potential, it is likely that some of these claims would



withstand a validity examination, making their development possible. To assure the long-term protection of existing high-quality wilderness values, it may be necessary to acquire the valid mineral rights. Otherwise, naturalness and opportunities for solitude will suffer if future mineral development occurs. The recommended suitable portion also contains 18 existing geothermal leases, in an area deemed to have high potential for that resource. Careful management will be required to accommodate geothermal development and at the same time protect the wilderness character of the land.

There are three ephemeral sheep grazing allotments within the WSA. The ephemeral sheep grazing can continue under wilderness designation, in accordance with an allotment management plan.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

#### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The Golden Valley WSA is located in the BLM Red Mountain Geology-Energy-Mineral (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M data in the wilderness section of the CDCA Plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) in 1980 stated that the WSA had potential for geothermal resources, uranium, zeolites, and feldspar. Approximately three unpatented mining claims were recorded with the BLM as of December 12, 1979.

Data from the BLM 1980 GRA file was incomplete and did not classify the potential for the occurrence of mineral resources in the WSA. The available data on geothermal resources was not fully analyzed, integrated, and interpreted. However, the GRA file data did document a uranium occurrence in the northwestern portion of the WSA and a zeolite and feldspar occurrence at the southwestern boundary, near Steam Well. Also cited was a U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) classification of the entire WSA as a Prospective Geothermal Resource Area (PGRA). The southwestern quarter of the WSA was included in an area classified by the USGS in 1974 as a Known Geothermal Resource Area (KGRA), which noted the existence of two geothermal wells in the WSA. In 1979, the USGS assigned a prospectively valuable classification for sodium and potassium in the northwestern one-third of the WSA.

2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should be Considered in the Final Recommendation: In 1983, the USGS and U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) conducted a mineral survey of the portion of the WSA recommended suitable for wilderness designation. Results of the BOM survey was published in report MLA 1-85 in 1985. The USGS published their findings together with the BOM in the USGS Bulletin 1708-D in 1985.



The BOM report stated that although no mines were active during the study period, and no recorded mineral production had occurred in the WSA, the workings in the southwestern portion of the WSA were probably the result of exploration activity tracing the extension of mineralization at the Rand Silver Mine about seven miles to the southwest. The WSA is adjacent to the Randsburg and Atolia Mining Districts, which have a combined recorded production of 0.5 million ounces of gold, ten million ounces of silver, and 18,400,000 pounds of tungsten concentrate. The BOM survey indicated that epithermal gold mineralization has occurred near the Steam Well, on the RAK mining claim group, and along the Browns Ranch fault zone on the Lava Mountain claim group within the WSA. The widespread alteration and the presence of anomalous concentrations of gold, silver, arsenic, antimony, tungsten, and mercury were observed in geochemical samples on the properties, providing evidence for epithermal gold mineralization.

The USGS and the BOM, in their combined report (USGS Bulletin 1708-D) stated that the entire WSA is situated between two intensely mineralized regions. The combined report stated that the northern portion of the WSA is the most intensely altered, classified as having a low potential for the occurrence of gold. The north-central portion of the WSA was classified as having a moderate potential for silver, lead, and zinc as shown on Map 2.

Two areas, one mile northwest and one-half miles northeast from the Steam Well, were classified by the USGS and BOM as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of geothermal resources, a high potential for gold and silver, and a low potential for sodium. In addition, a larger area encompassing the entire suitable southwestern portion of the WSA was classified as having a low potential for gold and silver. The suitable south-central portion of the WSA encompasses the Browns Ranch fault zone and was identified as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of epithermal precious metal deposits. This was supported by areomagnetic survey and geochemical data. The mineral classification shown on Map 2 shows the USGS and BOM classification of the area.

Since 1976, ten approvals had been given for geophysical exploration within the WSA. Fifty shallow temperature gradient holes and other surveys had been conducted within the southern one-third of the WSA. As of December, 1987, twenty-eight geothermal leases encompassed four-fifths of the WSA. The area within the KGRA is classified as having a high potential for the occurrence of geothermal resources under the BLM classification system.

Since 1980, three plans of operation to conduct exploration activities were approved by the BLM. A plan of operation submitted by Houston Oil and Minerals in 1983, allowed seven exploration holes to be drilled on the Lava Mountain group of mining claims. A plan of operation was submitted by ASARCO in 1987, for a five-hole exploration drilling program on the Lava Mountain mining claims.



Completed drilling and geologic mapping support the USGS and BOM moderate potential classification for this area based on intense alteration and silicified volcanic rock associated with epithermal gold mineralization.

Unpatented mining claims in the WSA are summarized in the following table taken from BLM records dated January, 1988.

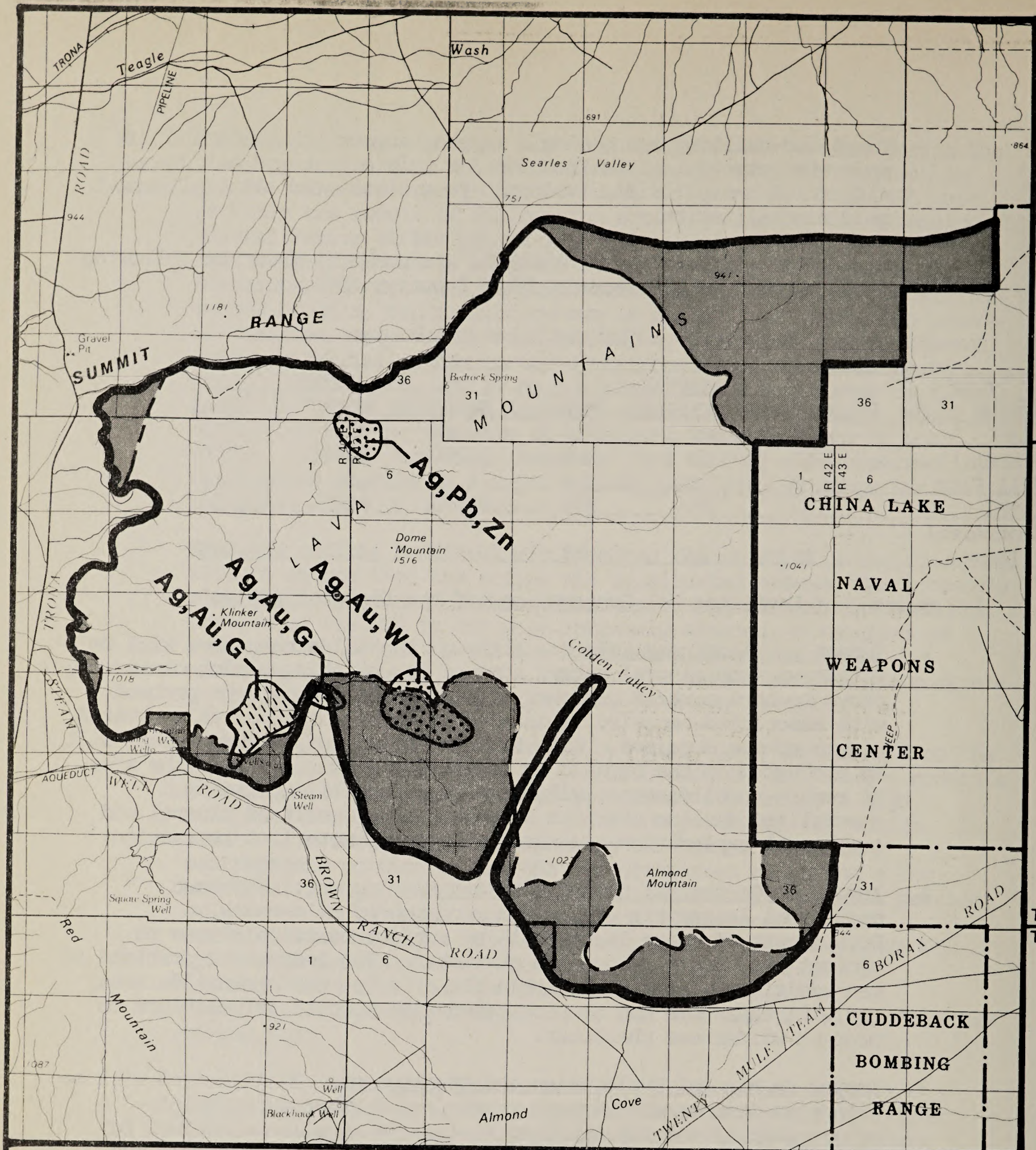
Table 4 - Mining Claims and Leases

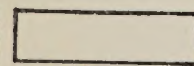


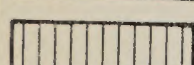
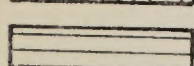
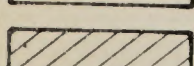
TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
MINING CLAIM						
Lode	74	142	216	1,480	2,840	4,320
Placer	57	51	108	2,280	2,040	4,320
Mill Site	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	131	193	324	3,760	4,880	8,640
Geothermal						
Leases	18	10	28	26,019	4,579	30,598

E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

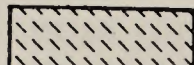
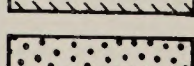
1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Although the wilderness area will be withdrawn from mineral entry, some of the existing mining claims may prove to have a valid discovery, allowing development to proceed with associated negative impacts on wilderness values, unless valid rights can be acquired. With this exception, wilderness values will be protected on the area to be designated wilderness. On the area to remain nonwilderness, wilderness values will experience a generalized decline over the long-term as a result of mineral and geothermal exploration and development, and motorized recreation.
2. Impact on Geothermal Exploration and Development: Eighteen geothermal leases are within the recommended wilderness. Development of these leases will be subject to stipulations to protect the area's wilderness character. Ten leases and portions of ten additional leases are within the area to remain nonwilderness, and will therefore not be encumbered with special stipulations to protect wilderness character.
3. Impact on Mineral Exploration and Development: 29,195 acres will be withdrawn from mineral entry, precluding further exploration. Development of the 131 existing mining claims will be subject to proof of a valid discovery. Approximately 20 percent of the WSA, containing an additional 193 mining claims, will be unaffected by the proposed action.





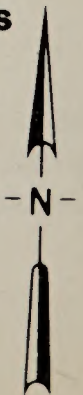
-  Recommended for Wilderness
-  Recommended for Non Wilderness
-  Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness
-  Split Estate
-  State
-  Private

### Explanation

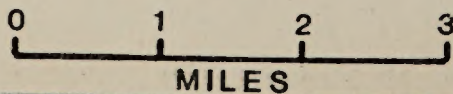
-  High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
-  Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
- M** Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area
- H** High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area

### Commodity Symbols

- Ag** Silver
- Au** Gold
- G** Geothermal
- Pb** Lead
- W** Tungsten
- Zn** Zinc



## Golden Valley Mineral Resource Potential



MAP-2  
CDCA-170



4. Impact on Desert Tortoise and Mohave Ground Squirrel Habitat: Tortoise and Mohave ground squirrel habitat will be maintained in a natural condition to the maximum extent possible in the recommended suitable area. Some habitat may be disturbed by mining activity in the recommended nonsuitable portion, and on any valid claims in the suitable portion. However, all planned actions throughout the WSA will be subjected to environmental analysis to identify potential adverse impacts and develop appropriate mitigation measures.
5. Impact on Ephemeral Sheep Grazing: Opportunities for grazing within the area will not be lessened by designation.
6. Impact on Wildflower Viewing: Opportunities for annual wildflower viewing will be diminished by the recommendation. Access to the traditional viewing areas will be restricted to those who are capable of hiking to the area. A slight beneficial impact to the wildflower beds will occur since vehicles will not impact the vegetation.
7. Impact on Cultural Resources: The most valuable sites are located in the recommended wilderness area, where they will receive the maximum possible protection from surface disturbance. Elimination of motor vehicle use within the wilderness will help reduce incidents of vandalism. These benefits will be offset somewhat by the additional restrictions wilderness designation places on scientific research and excavation. Throughout the WSA, all proposed activities will be subject to environmental analysis, which will evaluate the effect on cultural resources and develop mitigating measures to minimize impacts.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: A large number of comments contested the inclusion of a road in Golden Valley, stating that it is, in fact, only a jeep trail. Most of the road has been deleted, so that now it provides access only as far as Section 15 for grazing purposes, but does not continue through the valley. Many comments also expressed interest in motorized recreational use. However, no



competitive motorized areas are included in the WSA. All portions of the WSA have been identified previously in the BLM planning process for their natural values and have been managed as such.

2. Study Phase: Of the 61 comments received about this WSA, 30 favored wilderness designation. A large number of these suggested that WSAs 170 and 170A (170A was combined to form WSA 170 during the initial inventory) should be combined by closing the jeep trail which cuts through Golden Valley in the Lava Mountains. The outstanding wildflower displays were mentioned frequently. Other qualities contributing to high wilderness quality were scenic beauty, solitude, and opportunities for primitive recreation and nature study. Types of recreation mentioned were photography, hiking, horseback riding, and camping. Subjects suggested for nature study were archaeology, wildlife, botany, geology, etc.

The comments opposing wilderness status for this WSA mentioned grazing, military activities, as on-going activities detracting from wilderness potential. There were requests for continuation of off-highway vehicle use, mining, motorcycle competition, rockhounding, and grazing. Several energy production companies urged that the land not be closed prior to evaluation of geothermal resources. A few letters stated, mistakenly, that Golden Valley had been used by off-highway vehicle recreationists and was, thus, unsuitable for wilderness.

No comments were received in response to the Public Input Workbook (3/115/79).

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: A variety of comments on this WSA were received in response to the Draft Desert Plan. The opinions ranged from approval of the plan alternatives which was voiced from the conservation-oriented organizations, while opposition to the proposed amendments was posed by the National Outdoor Coalition, a coalition of mining, rockhounding and ORV groups. A few letters wanted to increase the acreage of wilderness beyond that recommended in the all wilderness alternative. Several respondents mentioned that exploration for and development of oil, gas, and geothermal resources would be the best use for the area.
4. Proposed Plan: Several letters requested the opening of a route through Golden Valley for vehicle use, including racing. Other comments were similar to those received on the Draft Plan.

No comments were received from local governments.



APPENDIX 1  
ESTIMATED COSTS OF ACQUISITION OF NON-FEDERAL HOLDINGS WITHIN  
AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR DESIGNATION  
GOLDEN VALLEY WSA (CDCA-170)

PARCEL No.	LEGAL DESCRIPTION				TOTAL ACREAGE	NUMBER OF OWNERS	TYPE OF OWNERSHIP BY ESTATE		PRESENTLY PROPOSED FOR ACQUISITION	PREFERRED METHOD OF ACQUISITION	ESTIMATED COST OF ACQUISITION	
	TWNSHP	RNG	SEC	MERIDIAN			SURFACE ESTATE	SUBSURFACE ESTATE			LAND COSTS (\$1000)	PROCESSING COSTS (\$1000)
1	29S.	41E.	22	MDM	100	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	2.5

These figures were derived from Bureau Land Records and provide for more detail than GIS estimates and therefore may differ from acreage summaries in Table 1.







# **Red Mountain**

*CDCA 172*







## RED MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-172)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA ---

7,114 acres

The Red Mountain WSA is located in San Bernardino County in the southeastern portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The WSA includes 6,561 acres of public lands under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), no acres of lands belonging to the State of California and private inholdings totalling approximately 553 acres. No split-estate lands exist within the WSA boundaries (see Map 1 and Table 1).

Beginning at Squaw Spring Well in the northern portion of the study area, the boundary parallels the eastern side of the road to Squaw Spring following it north for one mile where it then turns south and east skirting the foothills of an unnamed mesa for roughly two miles. The eastern boundary then heads south following various topographical features until it intersects with the northern edge of a utility line maintenance road which forms the southern boundary. Approximately one mile east of Highway 395, the western boundary leaves the utility line maintenance road and follows an unnamed wash north for two miles, then traverses the base of Red Mountain for three miles heading north and west until it intersects with Squaw Spring.

The WSA contains approximately 75% mountains and 25% hills encompassing an area three miles wide and four miles long. The predominate feature of the study area is Red Mountain, a volcanic "plug" composed of red-colored volcanic rock which dominates the western portion of the WSA. Smaller hills and knobs make up the remainder of the study area. Numerous washes emerging from the mountains dissect the bajadas below. The WSA falls within the broad classification of American desert province. Scant desert vegetation consisting of low desert shrubs of the creosote scrub plant community is found on the lower slopes. Steeper slopes along the range are relatively void of vegetation. No permanent water sources exist within the study area. No BLM sensitive or Federal or State listed rare, threatened or endangered plant species are known to occur in this WSA. Two wildlife species of management concern occur in the southwest portion of the study area (See Special Features).

One section (640 acres) in the northern portion of the WSA encompasses the entire Squaw Spring Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC); an area set aside for the protection of cultural and historic resources (See Special Features).

The WSA is completely within a portion of the Cantil Common grazing allotment. An Allotment Management Plan (AMP) completed for the grazing lease describes the grazing system to be followed and outlines actions to be taken to improve range conditions and minimize conflicts with other resources.



The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0 acres recommended for  
wilderness  
6,561 BLM acres recommended for  
nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage is released for uses other than wilderness. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan and further explained in the California Wilderness Study Overview.

The no wilderness recommendation is based on the following rationale: (1) the landforms and ecosystems of this WSA are already well represented in other areas identified for wilderness preservation; (2) the area's value as wilderness is overshadowed by its potential for motorized recreation, mining and oil and gas exploration and production; and (3) the resource values in the WSA would be best managed and maintained under nonwilderness management. Adherence to the CDCA Plan's limited use guidelines coupled with restrictions outlined in existing management plans serve to lessen potential impacts to resources within the WSA.

The WSA is typical of the desert environments within the transition zone between the Great Basin and Mojave Deserts. Within 50 air miles are five BLM areas recommended for wilderness designation and three designated areas administered by the USDA Forest Service. All are mountainous and all contain a greater representation of the resources represented within the Red Mountain WSA.

Current recreation use within the Red Mountain WSA is almost exclusively motorized, and would therefore be displaced by wilderness designation. Use is estimated at 100 visitor-use days annually, with the predominant activity being hunting. The northern portion of the WSA shows numerous trails by off-highway vehicles (OHV). There are approximately five miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.

The WSA is located east of the Red Mountain and Randsburg Mining Districts. The known gold and silver mineralization in these nearby mining districts indicates good potential for similar mineralization within WSA 172. Additionally, the study area is within the Randsburg Known Geothermal Resource Area (KGRA) and has been classified as prospectively valuable for sodium/potassium and oil/gas by the United States Geological Survey (USGS). Wilderness designation would conflict with full development of these potential resources since the area would be withdrawn from mineral entry and



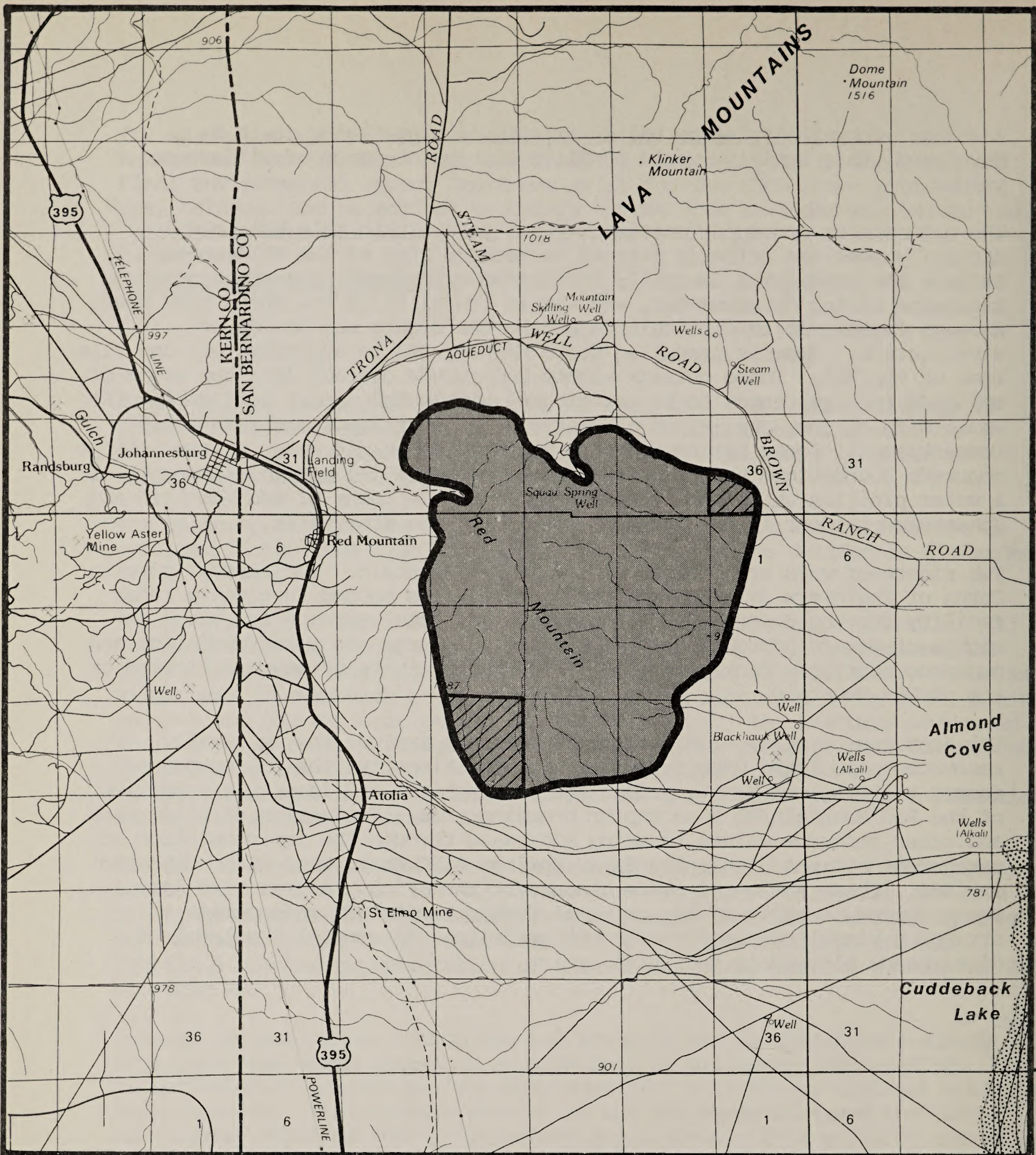
leasing. Conversely, since valid, existing mining claims could be developed, this activity would conflict with maintenance of wilderness values.

The naturalness and opportunities for solitude within this WSA only minimally meet the criteria defined in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act. Because the study area is small, surrounded by private property containing extensive mining developments, and within ten miles of the China Lake Naval Weapons Center, it is difficult to escape the sights and sounds of civilization. Heavily travelled State Highway 395 is approximately one mile west of the WSA. These outside sights and sounds detract from the sense of solitude and remoteness to be experienced within the area. Considering the small size of the area, human alterations to naturalness are relatively concentrated. Squaw Spring contains remnants of an old water system. Large concrete foundations and a concrete storage tank still remain. Remnants of a water pipeline which once supplied water to the towns of Red Mountain and Johannesburg occur in the northern portion of the study area.

Two rights-of-ways are located on top of Red Mountain. The first, is for a Corps of Engineers aviation monitoring site. The second involves a radar facility for the Department of the Navy. The total acreage for the rights-of-way is approximately five acres. A large concrete foundation and numerous acetylene tanks associated with these rights-of-way are located on top of Red Mountain.

The features of major significance in this WSA include the cultural resources associated with Squaw Spring. Additionally, the WSA possesses desert tortoise and Mohave ground squirrel habitat and is within a portion of the Red Mountain/El Paso raptor breeding area. Protection of wilderness and other resource values is being addressed through the implementation of management actions within the Squaw Springs ACEC Management Plan completed in 1988. These actions include closure of the primary access road into Squaw Spring, fencing of the cultural resource site and enforcement of stringent visual resource management guidelines to control the level of disturbance allowed in sensitive areas.



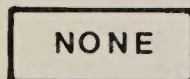


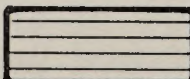




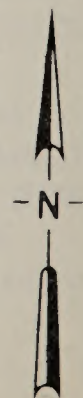
T29S  
T30S

T30S  
T31S

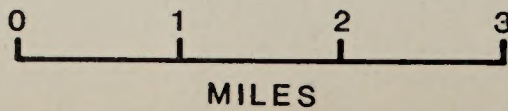
R40E R41E

R41E R42E

- |   |                            |   |
|---|----------------------------|---|
|  NONE  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  SPLIT ESTATE |
|  RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |                            |  STATE        |
|  LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |                            |  PRIVATE      |



Red Mountain  
Proposal  
MAP-1



CDCA-172  
JUNE, 1988



TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	6,561
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		553
Total		<u>7,114</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	6,561
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>6,561</u>

### 3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

#### A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The lower slopes of the WSA are impacted by OHV use. There has been an abundance of mining activity within the WSA as evidenced by the numerous assessment pits, mining claim markers, and access routes. Many of these claims are pre-FLPMA with development potential which would significantly alter the naturalness of the overall WSA. The facilities associated with the existing rights-of-way at the top of Red Mountain also contribute to a degradation of the natural character.



2. Solitude: Opportunities for solitude are obtainable throughout the WSA, but are compromised by the outside sights and sounds of noise from areas just outside of the WSA such as the town of Red Mountain, traffic from Highway 395 and the county road to the town of Trona. The outside influences significantly effect the solitude as their activities can be seen and heard from the entire eastern side of the WSA.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are available within the WSA. The canyons and hills allow penetration into the area and provide topographic screening from other visitors. Higher elevations afford good views of the surrounding features. The significant ongoing human activity from adjacent communities and the various impacts of man's work in the northern and eastern portions of the study area detract from the overall primitive recreation potential.
4. Special Features: Fifteen percent of the WSA falls within the range of the Mohave ground squirrel, a state-listed rare species. The washes and bajadas provide good habitat for the desert tortoise with densities of approximately 50 to 100 individuals per square mile. The desert tortoise is a BLM sensitive species in California and is currently under status review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for listing as a threatened species. Additionally, the study area is within the Red Mountain/El Paso Raptor breeding area and is utilized as a foraging area by golden eagles and prairie falcons.

A small area (640 acres) in the northern portion of the study area encompasses the Squaw Spring ACEC; an area identified for the protection of cultural resources. The site contains numerous house rings, metates, petroglyphs and other highly visible evidence of aboriginal presence.

In recognition of this special feature, the Squaw Spring site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1981.

#### B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: The WSA contains 6,561 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush (*Larrea*) ecosystem. Designation of the study area would not contribute any additional unique or distinct features to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Wilderness values in the area are unpretentious. Other suitably recommended WSA's throughout the CDCA offer a more extensive and diverse representation of this ecosystem.



Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,261,348
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,647,544

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of eleven major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria-Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
San Diego	15	1,043,680	100	3,378,814
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of five BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness area is Domeland, 50 miles east, administered by USDA Forest Service in Sequoia National Forest.



### C. Manageability

The Red Mountain WSA is manageable as wilderness. However, there are several significant issues which would complicate manageability of the area as such.

With few exceptions, the boundaries of this study area are not well defined on the ground. For the most part, the boundaries were established along contour lines and occasional topography. Extensive signing would be necessary to enforce the mandates of the Wilderness Act.

Many of the area's 79 mining claims are within the zone predicted to have moderate potential for gold, silver, and copper. Unless the United States can acquire the valid mineral rights, those claims can be developed, which would severely degrade wilderness values.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The Red Mountain WSA is located in the BLM Red Mountain Geology-Energy-Mineral Resource Area (GRA). The G-E-M narrative in the wilderness section of the CDCA plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) in 1980, stated that the WSA has potential for the occurrence of gold, silver, sodium, potassium, oil, gas and geothermal resources. As of December 12, 1979, there were no unpatented mining claims recorded with the BLM in the WSA.

The 1980 BLM GRA file data contains a limited amount of information in support of the EIS G-E-M statement. The data from the 1980 BLM file was incomplete and no assessment of mineral potential was made for mineral resource occurrence. However, the 1980 BLM GRA file data did show that the entire WSA was classified as having a high potential for the occurrence of silver and gold. The extreme southeastern portion of the WSA was classified by the 1980 BLM GRA file data as having a high potential for the occurrence of tungsten. These classifications are shown on the accompanying minerals potential map. The western portion of the WSA is included in the Rand Mining (gold, silver) District and the southern portion in the Atolia (tungsten) Mining District. The combined recorded production from these districts amount to 10,000,000 ounces of silver, 500,000 ounces of gold and 920,000 short tons of tungsten ore (1980 BLM GRA file).

The northeastern portion of the WSA is encompassed by the Randsburg Known Geothermal Resource Area. The 1980 BLM GRA file data also documented a USGS (USGS, Conservation Division, 1979) classification of the eastern one-half of the WSA as a Potential Geothermal



Resource Area (PGRA). In addition, the entire WSA was classified by the USGS (Conservation Division, 1979) as prospectively valuable for sodium and potassium.

The 1980 BLM GRA file documented the USGS classification of certain portions of the WSA for geothermal, sodium and potassium. Based on the BLM classification system, the northeastern portion of the WSA encompassed by the Randsburg KGRA is classified as having a high potential for the occurrence of geothermal resources. In addition, the eastern one-third of the WSA is classified as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of geothermal resources (See Map 2).

2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should Be Considered in the Final Recommendation: No USGS or U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral surveys have been conducted for the WSA because it is recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

Since 1980, no plans of operation for mineral exploration within the WSA have been submitted to the BLM. However, significant new exploration, development and production continues to occur in the Rand Mining District immediately adjacent to the WSA. The recent resumption of activities in the Rand District is reflected by the high concentrations of unpatented lode claims located within the northern portion of the WSA. Unpatented mining claims located within the WSA are summarized in the following table taken from BLM mineral records dated December, 1987.

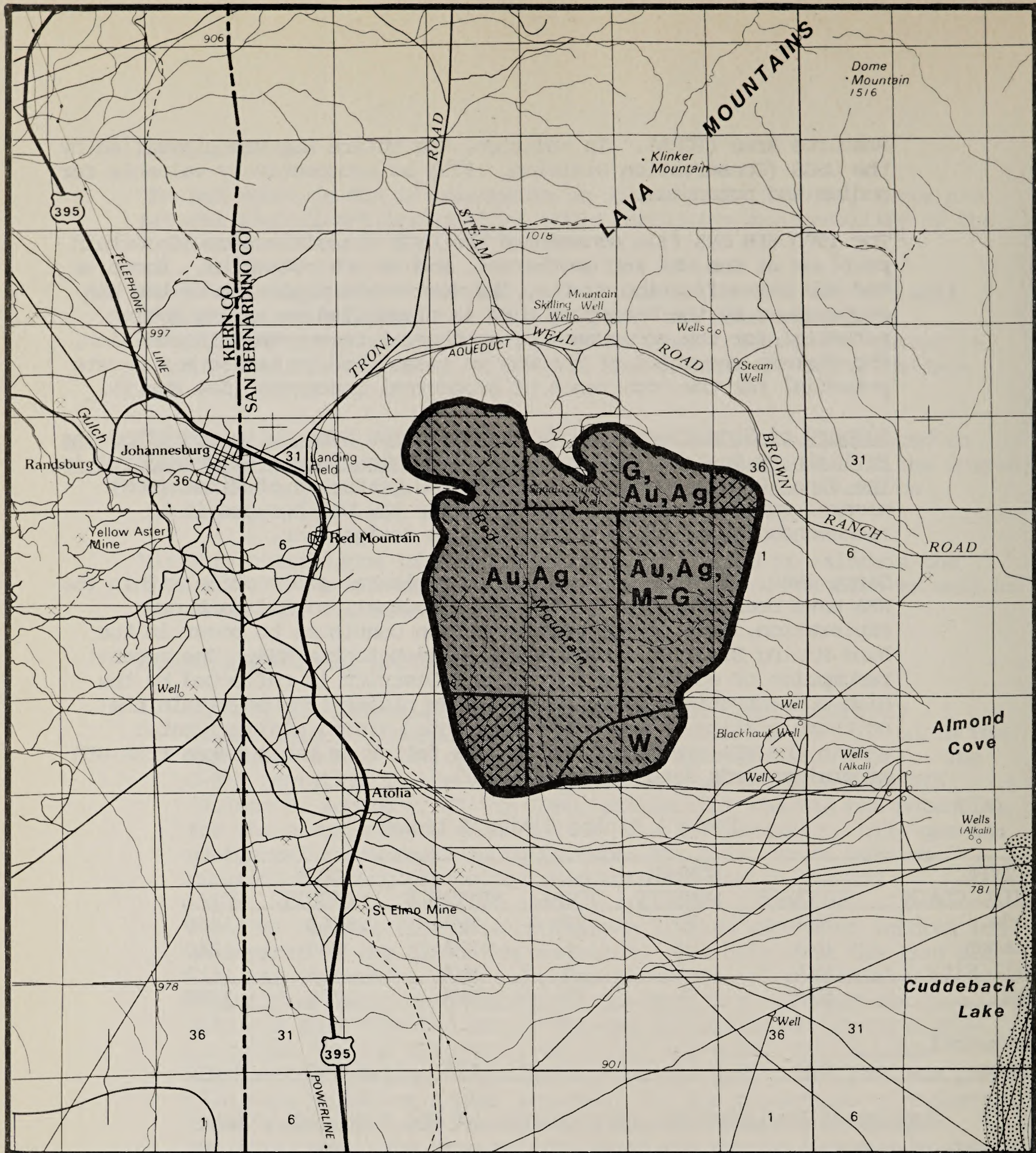
Table 4 Mining Claims & Leases

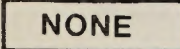

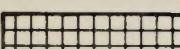
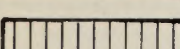
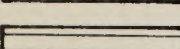
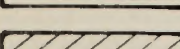
TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUTT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUTT.	TOTAL
MINING CLAIM						
Lode	N/A	73	73	N/A	1460	1460
Placer	N/A	6	6	N/A	240	240
Mill Site	N/A	0	0	N/A	0	0
Total	N/A	79	79	N/A	1700	1700
Geothermal						
Leases	N/A	6	6	N/A	6,048	6,048

#### E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

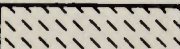
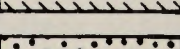
1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Wilderness values will decline over the long-term as exploration and development occurs in areas of moderate mineral and oil and gas potential, and in areas used for OHV recreation. Wilderness values will be retained in the portions of the WSA not subjected to these uses.





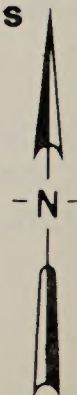
- |   |      |   |
|---|------|---|
|  | NONE | Recommended for Wilderness                  |
|  |      | Recommended for Non Wilderness              |
|  |      | Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness |
|  |      | Split Estate                                |
|  |      | State                                       |
|  |      | Private                                     |

### Explanation

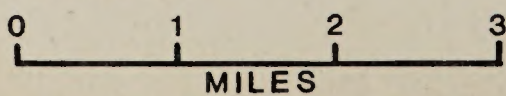
- |   |  |
|---|--|
|  | High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals     |
|  | Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals |
| <b>M</b>  | Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area       |
| <b>H</b>  | High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area       |

### Commodity Symbols

- |           |            |
|-----------|------------|
| <b>Ag</b> | Silver     |
| <b>Au</b> | Gold       |
| <b>G</b>  | Geothermal |
| <b>W</b>  | Tungsten   |



## Red Mountain Mineral Resource Potential



MAP-2  
CDCA-172



2. Impact on Locatable Mineral Exploration and Development: The proposed action will have no impact. Further exploration, as well as development of the 79 existing claims, can proceed subject to guidelines established in the CDCA Plan and existing regulations.
3. Impact on Mineral leasing: The proposed action will have no impact. Further exploration and development of the existing leases can proceed subject to environmental analysis.
4. Impact on Native American Uses and Values: Native American access to traditional hunting areas and collection sites will be retained.
5. Impact on Archeological Resources: All proposed surface-disturbing activities will be subjected to environmental analysis to allow the detection of resources and the mitigation or avoidance of any impacts.
6. Impact on Sensitive Wildlife Habitat: Localized impacts caused by vehicle use and surface disturbance associated with mineral exploration and development will be minor as less than 15% of the overall study area provides habitat for the desert tortoise and Mohave ground squirrel. Management guidelines in the CDCA Plan along with enforcement of State laws will provide protection of these sensitive species.
7. Impact on the Squaw Spring ACEC: Low intensity, multiple use guidelines along with management prescriptions for the ACEC will prevail. The road into the ACEC has been closed and gated since 1978. Low levels of impact should occur within the ACEC.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: Over 50 comments were received on this roadless area. About 75 percent of those comments recommended dropping the area from further wilderness study. Most cited motorized vehicle activities and mining activities on the slopes. Of those advocating further wilderness study, the natural values of the higher areas and the opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreational activities were cited. The area was visited on the ground several times and most of the areas impacted by man's activities were



excluded from further wilderness study. However, the higher and steeper areas of the mountain showed little sign of man's presence or use of the area, and findings were not changed in those portions.

The State of California's Lands Commission filed a protest with BLM State Director which dealt specifically with WSA 172. It concerned the State's ability to manage the development of geothermal energy on State lands in the Randsburg KGRA (known geothermal resource area) during the wilderness study period. The protest was denied.

The American Motorcyclist Association (AMA) and the National Outdoor Coalition (NOC) filed appeals to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) concerning inclusion of WSA 172 in the wilderness inventory. The AMA protested checkerboard ownership, external intrusions affecting wilderness quality, and lack of areas for solitude and primitive recreation throughout the entire WSA. NOC mentioned the same points but added a complaint about non-wilderness corridors, or "cherry stems" and about including areas which may need rehabilitation. The appeals were denied.

2. Study Phase: Of the 65 comments received on WSA 172, 53 opposed wilderness designation. Almost all of the responses were from off-road vehicle users who felt the area was unsuitable for wilderness because of its long time use for ORV recreation. The area was said to be excellent for ORV use because the soils were stable and not easily damaged. Outstanding riding opportunities were available, and many respondents asked that the area be left open for family camping and competitive events. Several factors were said to interfere with wilderness quality and with opportunities for solitude and primitive types of recreation. These included abandoned mines and shacks, roads, powerlines, and the nearby towns of Randsburg, Johannesburg, and Atolia.

Three responses mentioned the area's mineral potential. Two mining companies and one individual asked that the area within the Randsburg KGRA be left open for geothermal energy development.

Twelve letters supported a wilderness designation. They listed the following features as contributing to the unit's wilderness quality: archaeologic, historic, scenic, botanic, wildlife, geologic, and cultural resources. Opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation were said to be excellent. One respondent felt that the adjacency of the unit to a highway allowed easy access for wilderness users; another felt that the closeness to the tortoise preserve would provide a good buffer to protect the preserve.

Two comments were received in response to the Public Input Workbook (3/15/79). Both opposed wilderness designation. One stated that the amount of the WSA which was eligible for wilderness was so small that management would be difficult. The other comment mentioned the popularity of family rockhounding in this area and suggested that the lower elevations be dropped from wilderness consideration and only the high parts maintained in the wilderness study.



3. Draft Plan Alternatives: Few public comments were received specific to WSA 172. However, this WSA was one of those opposed by the National Outdoor Coalition, a coalition of mining, rock-hounding, and off-road vehicle groups. A large number of club members sent in printed coupons and letters supporting a multiple use designation of "moderate use" for this area; this designation was offered by the Use Alternative. Wilderness proponents and conservation organizations supported the Protection Alternative which recommended wilderness for this unit. Some mining companies opposed wilderness because of the area's mineral and geothermal potential.
4. Proposed Plan: There were scattered letters giving the same opinions described above. However, neither the wilderness proponents nor the wilderness opponents made the Red Mountain area a major area of concern. A few letters stated that closing the area as wilderness would force ORV users to overcrowd the Johnson Valley Open Area.

No comments were received from local governments.







# **Blackwater Well**

*CDCA 173*







## BLACKWATER WELL WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-173)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA --- 8,536 acres

The Blackwater Well WSA (CDCA-173) is located in San Bernardino County, in the west-central portion of the CDCA. The city of Ridgecrest is located 23 miles northwest. The WSA includes 7,896 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and 640 acres of private inholdings (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The eastern boundary of the WSA is the China Lake Naval Weapons Center, Mojave "B" Testing Range. A dirt road forms the southern boundary. The western and northern boundary of the WSA is the old Twenty Mule Team Borax Road.

The WSA contains 55% alluvial fans, 40% lava flows, and 5% pediments. Elevations range from 3521 to 4547 feet. The dominant physical feature is a boulder-strewn lava mesa three miles long and one mile wide. The orientation of this flat-top landform is north-south with steep sides of dark brown volcanic rock. East of the mesa is a gently sloping bajada which extends to the eastern border of the WSA. The dominate vegetation is the typical creosote bush scrub plant community. Some scattered Joshua trees dot the landscape.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE --- 0 acres recommended for wilderness 7,896 BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for the Blackwater Well WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. Future activities in the area will be controlled by low intensity, multiple use management guidelines as prescribed in the CDCA Plan. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally-preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan and further explained in the California Wilderness Study Overview.



The overall lack of high quality wilderness values was the fundamental reason for the nonsuitability recommendation for the Blackwater Well WSA. Other existing uses of the area, primarily livestock grazing, when compounded by the existing routes of travel and range improvements that mar the naturalness of the area, are of greater significance than the area's values as wilderness. Designation of this area as wilderness would not contribute any additional unique or distinct features to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Overall, the area has minimum wilderness values. Other similar WSAs in the California Desert that are recommended suitable offer a more extensive and diverse representation of desert wilderness values.

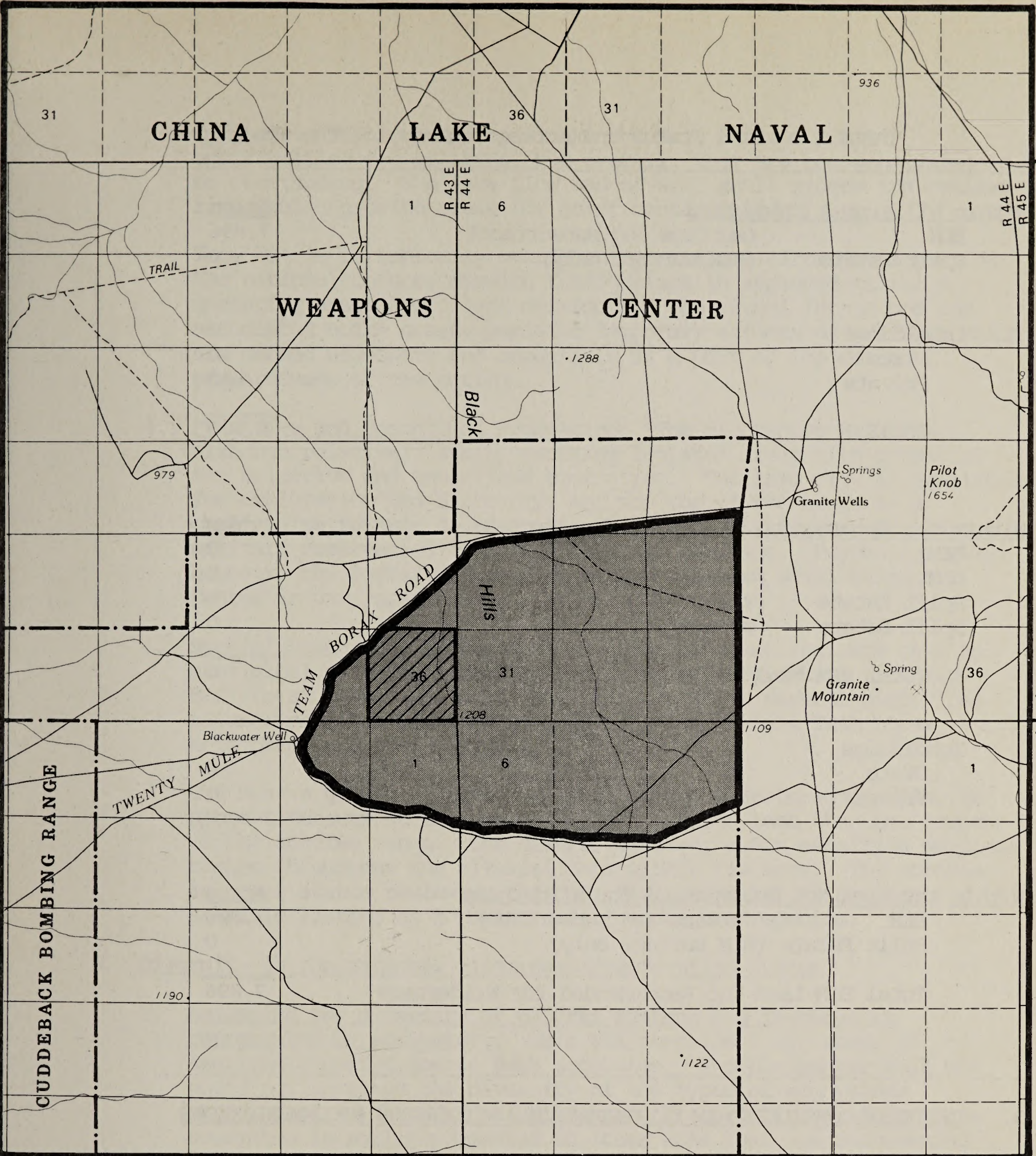
The WSA contains no special or unique landforms, geologic features or vegetative assemblages. The scenery is commonplace. Certain portions of the WSA have outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation. Overall, however, such opportunities are limited. There are approximately four miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.

The existing signs of man are spread uniformly throughout the entire WSA. Two wildlife water cachements are located within the WSA, one in the northwest and one in the middle of the area. Several access routes also intrude into the interior of the WSA. In the southwest portion of the area, a communication transmission facility is located on one of the more prominent hills.

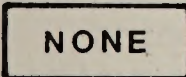

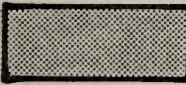
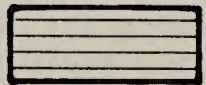

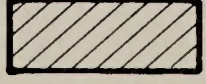
Cattle grazing is the primary land use in the area. The entire WSA is within the Pilot Knob Grazing Allotment and has been grazed for many years. A cattle water tank and maintenance route are located in the southeast corner of the area. A pipeline, with two cattle troughs and associated maintenance routes, are located in the northeastern portion of the WSA.

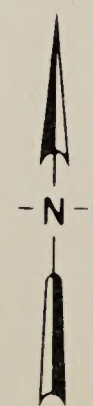
The WSA does contain some special features such as an area of high cultural resource sensitivity, a State-listed threatened species and a BLM sensitive species. Although the area lacks high quality wilderness values, these other significant features will continue to be appropriately managed and protected under the low intensity management for the area contained in the CDCA Plan.



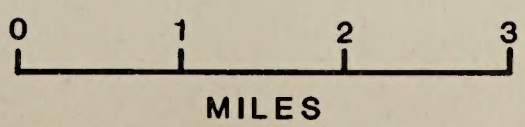


R43E R44E

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  NONE | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS                  |  SPLIT ESTATE |
|       | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |  STATE        |
|       | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  PRIVATE      |



**Blackwater Well  
Proposal  
MAP-1**



CDCA-173  
JUNE, 1988



TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	7,896
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		640
Total		<u>8,536</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	7,896
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>7,896</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The Blackwater Well WSA is predominantly natural. The central portion of the area is dominated by a lava mesa strewn with black basalt boulders. On either side of the mesa are sloping alluvial fans dominated by the creosote bush vegetative community. However, grazing improvements such as tanks, pipelines and water troughs, and maintained access routes to facilitate livestock management are found throughout the WSA and reduce naturalness somewhat.



2. Solitude: Portions of the Blackwater Well WSA contain opportunities for solitude, but overall, they are not considered to be outstanding. The lava flow has several small ridges and boulder rises which provide areas for quiet contemplation.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The Blackwater Well WSA, although relatively small, contains isolated areas with potential for primitive and unconfined recreation. The lava flow is available for exploration and discovery, and the top of the ridge is a challenging feature to reach to obtain a view into the adjoining military reservation or across a sweeping bajada. Psychologically, however, the fortified boundary of the adjacent Naval Weapons Center is very confining.
4. Special Features: Archaeological investigations indicate that an aboriginal settlement with occupational history dating from 1200 B.C. to at least 1850 A.D. is within the WSA. Several historical sites associated with ranching and the Twenty Mule Team Borax enterprise are also present.

The Mohave ground squirrel, a State-listed threatened species, is present throughout the WSA. The WSA contains less than one percent of the species range. The desert tortoise, a BLM sensitive species, ranges throughout the alluvial fans within the area. The tortoise is under status review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for possible listing as a threatened or endangered species.

## B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 7,896 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush ecosystem. The Blackwater Well WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This ecosystem is well represented in other WSAs that are recommended suitable for wilderness in the CDCA.



Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,260,013
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,646,209

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of ten major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria-Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
San Diego	15	1,043,680	100	3,378,814
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of six BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness area is Domeland Wilderness, which is administered by Sequoia National Forest, 60 miles to the northwest.



### C. Manageability

The Blackwater Well WSA is manageable as wilderness. However, the effort that would be necessary to manage the area for wilderness is not justified given the overall lack of quality wilderness values.

The area contains marginal wilderness values that are marred with signs of man. The majority of these intrusions could be rehabilitated to bolster the qualities of the area and tie the various sections of the WSA together as one unit.

Livestock grazing has occurred in the area for many years. The numerous range improvements in the WSA require regular maintenance. Mechanized equipment has historically been used to maintain the viability of these facilities. Long-term grazing in the area, in the same manner and degree that has occurred in the past, will very likely continue to result in impacts that are not compatible with management of the area for its wilderness values.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The Blackwater Well WSA is located in the BLM Red Mountain Geology-Energy-Mineral (GEM) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M data in the wilderness section of the CDCA plan EIS Volume B. Appendix III stated that there were no known mineral prospects or occurrences in this WSA. As of December 12, 1979, there were no unpatented mining claims recorded with the BLM in the WSA.

The 1980 BLM file data documented a USGS prospectively valuable classification (1979) for oil and gas throughout the entire WSA. However, the BLM GRA file data also documents gravity and surficial geologic data that indicates the presence of a thin alluvial cover over a shallow granitic bedrock. Therefore, based on the BLM classification system, the eastern one-half of the WSA can be classified as having a low occurrence potential for oil and gas deposits.

The data from the 1980 BLM GRA file was incomplete and no assessment of mineral potential was made for locatable, salable and leasable minerals.

2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should be Considered in the Final Recommendation: No U.S. Bureau of Mines or U.S. Geologic Surveys (USGS) were conducted within the WSA because it is recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.



Unpatented mining claims in the WSA are summarized in the following table taken from BLM records dated December, 1987.

Table 4 Mining Claims

TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
MINING CLAIM						
Lode	N/A	3	3	N/A	60	60
Placer	N/A	0	0	N/A	0	0
Mill Site	N/A	0	0	N/A	0	0
Total	N/A	3	3	N/A	60	60

E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Noise, surface disturbances and access requirements for mineral exploration and development will negatively impact naturalness, solitude, and primitive and unconfined types of recreation. However, the mineral potential of the area is unknown and any development will primarily affect site-specific areas. Off-highway vehicle travel through the area will continue to adversely impact solitude. Continued maintenance of the range improvements will adversely impact naturalness and opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation.
2. Impact on Mineral Exploration and Development: The mineral potential of the WSA is unknown. However, opportunities for exploration and development will continue to be available subject to applicable laws, regulations and the low intensity, multiple use management guidelines established in the CDCA Plan.
3. Impacts on Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation: Opportunities for motorized recreation on designated routes of travel will continue to be available within the area.
4. Impact on Habitat for the Desert Tortoise and the Mohave Ground Squirrel: Given that there is little likelihood for mineral development in the WSA, and the low intensity land use prescriptions for the area, there are no significant adverse impacts anticipated.
5. Impact on Cultural Resources: The low intensity land use prescriptions for the area will further compliment the existing laws and regulations that protect and preserve cultural resource values.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.



G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: Most comments were general statements directed at several roadless areas in the region and addressed study phase considerations.
2. Study Phase: Only seven comments were received on this WSA. Of these, six opposed wilderness designation for the area. Two said that the area had too much activity going on to allow it to be appropriate for wilderness. Other letters defined this activity as cattle grazing and motorized vehicle use. The strongest statement was that there is no wilderness value in an area bordered by the US Naval Weapons Center that is also extensively used for grazing. It was pointed out that frequent low altitude supersonic jet flights from George Air Force Base and other nearby aircraft facilities pass over the area at low levels. Also mentioned was past use of the area for ORV play.

The one letter favoring wilderness designation indicated that the area was scenic, had unique flora and fauna, and should be saved for the future. It was stated that the area would provide a buffer for the tortoise preserve.

No comments were received in response to the Public Input Workbook (3/15/79).

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: Few public comments specific to this WSA were received in response to the Draft Plan Alternatives. However, this WSA was one of those opposed by the National Outdoor Coalition, a coalition of mining, rockhounding, and off-highway vehicle groups. A large number of club members sent in printed coupons supporting a multiple use designation of "moderate use" for this WSA which was in agreement with the recommendation of the Use Alternative. Wilderness proponents and conservation groups favored the Protection Alternative which designated this area as wilderness.
4. Proposed Plan: There were no specific comments on this WSA in response to the Proposed Plan. The Proposed Plan recommended "limited use" for this area. Conservationists were unsatisfied because they wanted a wilderness recommendation; motorized vehicle oriented recreationists were also displeased since they wanted "moderate use." These opinions were expressed in generalized comments by both types of organizations.

No comments were received from local governments.







# **Grass Valley**

*CDCA 173A*







## GRASS VALLEY WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-173A)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA ---

15,201 acres

The Grass Valley WSA is located in San Bernardino County in the west-central portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The city of Ridgecrest is located 25 miles to the northwest. The WSA includes 15,098 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and 103 acres of land owned by the State of California (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern boundary of the WSA is a graded dirt road and the eastern boundary is the China Lake Naval Weapons Center, Mojave "B" Testing Range. Graded dirt roads form the southern and western boundaries. The northern two miles of the western boundary is a fence and associated maintenance route.

The Grass Valley WSA contains approximately 45% alluvial fans, 45% pediments, and ten percent hills. Grass Valley is the main topographic feature of the area. It slopes to the east and covers three quarters of the WSA. A series of scattered hills lie in the western portion of the area. The hills are reddish-brown to yellow in appearance, with elevations of 200-600 feet above the desert floor. The valley supports a typical creosote scrub community with a scattering of Joshua trees.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0	acres recommended for wilderness
15,098	BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. Future activities in the area will be controlled by low intensity management guidelines as prescribed in the CDCA Plan. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan and further explained in the California Wilderness Study Overview.



The Grass Valley WSA is not recommended for wilderness primarily because of existing surface disturbances that seriously degrade the wilderness values. Designation of this area as wilderness would not contribute any additional unique or distinct features to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Overall, the area has very low quality wilderness values. Other similar WSAs in the California Desert that are recommended suitable offer a more extensive and diverse representation of desert wilderness values.

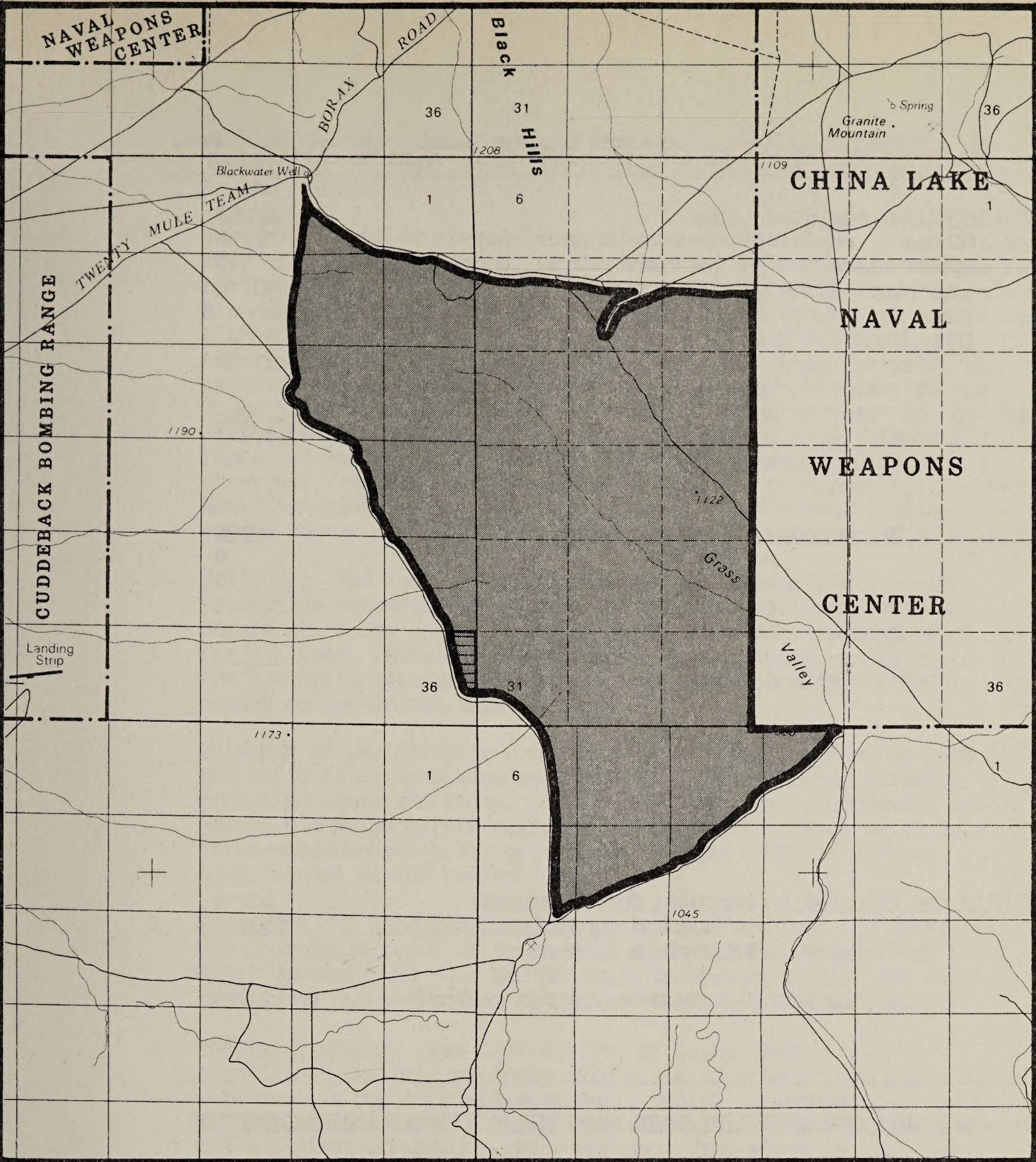
The naturalness of the northeastern portion of the WSA is seriously impacted by the "Old Red Mountain to Barstow Road." This route of travel has been bladed into the surface to an average depth of one foot and also has berms averaging one foot high. It is a well-used route for off-highway vehicle travel and it isolates approximately 1,760 acres of the northeast portion of the WSA. There are approximately 15 miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.

Other signs of man, primarily associated with the Pilot Knob Grazing Allotment, are spread throughout the rest of the entire WSA. Five sets of livestock watering troughs and two tractor-trailer bodies are located in the northeastern, eastern, and western portions of the WSA. There are over eight miles of barbed wire fences for livestock management within the WSA. Associated with the fences, are six and one-half miles of access routes.

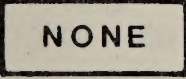


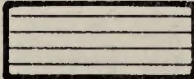

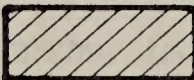
Opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined types of recreation exist, but they are very limited due to the nondescript nature of the land and the lack of topographic screening. Compounding these natural drawbacks, are the many surface disturbances that impact naturalness and serve to further limit opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation.

The WSA does contain some special features such as an area of high cultural resource sensitivity, a State-listed threatened species, and a BLM sensitive species. Although the area lacks quality wilderness values, these other significant features will continue to be appropriately managed and protected under the low intensity use for the area contained in the CDCA Plan.





R43E R44E

- |   |                            |  |
|---|----------------------------|--|
|  NONE  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  SPLIT ESTATE |
|  RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |                            |  STATE        |
|  LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |                            |  PRIVATE      |

Grass Valley  
Proposal  
MAP-1

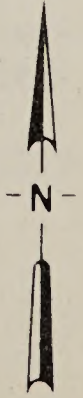
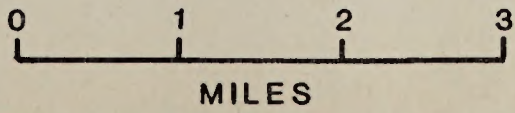




TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	15,098
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		103
Private		0
Total		<u>15,201</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	15,098
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>15,098</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: A route of travel which is locally known as the "Old Red Mountain to Barstow Road," cuts off the entire northeast portion of the area. Two other routes of travel intrude into the area on the west side of the WSA, each for approximately one-half mile.

There are two sets of watering troughs associated with a pipeline and two tractor-trailer tank bodies used for watering cattle within the WSA boundaries. Two metal water troughs and one of the trailers



are located on the east side of the area. The second trailer is located on the west border along with three water troughs adjacent to the trailer.

There are parts of three livestock management systems, which include over eight miles of fence, in the WSA. One system is located in the northwest portion of the WSA and consists of a north-south fence and a connecting east-west fence. Two other short fences are associated with this same fence system and use natural barriers such as topographic features to connect them with the other fences in the system. The second fence system is the southern boundary of the Pilot Knob Grazing Allotment and results in the southern one-quarter of the WSA being separated from the rest of the area. The third fence system is a short fence in the southwestern portion that stretches from the western border to the most prominent hill in the WSA. Associated with these fences are six and one-half miles of access routes.

2. Solitude: The lack of topographic diversity, and the minimal vegetative screening within the WSA that is provided by low desert shrubs and a few scattered Joshua trees, provides few opportunities for solitude. Marginal opportunities for solitude can be found in the low hills within the western portion of the WSA, but it also cannot be considered outstanding.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: Opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation are available in portions the WSA. However, the "Old Red Mountain to Barstow Road," and the many fences and associated access routes, do have a limiting affect.
4. Special Features: Two square miles of highly sensitive and significant cultural resource values are located in the WSA. Their existence is due to Blackwater Well, which is located just north of the WSA. A seasonal aboriginal settlement is located in this area and was first occupied 3,000 years ago. The sites in the settlement have been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

The Mohave ground squirrel, a State-listed threatened species, is present throughout the WSA. The WSA contains less than one percent of the species range. The entire area is desert tortoise habitat. The desert tortoise is a BLM "sensitive" species and is being considered for listing as threatened by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: The Grass Valley WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The Grass Valley WSA contains 15,098 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush (Larrea) ecosystem, which is represented in other WSAs that are recommended suitable for wilderness in the CDCA.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,252,811
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,639,007

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of ten major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.



Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

<u>Population Centers</u>	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria-Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
San Diego	15	1,043,680	100	3,378,814
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of six BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness area is Domeland Wilderness, which is administered by Sequoia National Forest, 65 miles to the northwest of the area.

#### C. Manageability

The Grass Valley WSA is manageable as wilderness. However, a significant effort will be required to manage the area for wilderness.

The area contains only marginal wilderness values that are marred with many signs of man. Several of these intrusions would need to be rehabilitated in an attempt to bolster the qualities of the area and tie the various sections of the WSA together as one unit.

Livestock grazing has occurred in the area for many years. The numerous range improvements in the WSA require regular maintenance. Mechanized equipment has historically been required to maintain the viability of these facilities. Long-term grazing in the area, in the same manner and degree that has occurred in the past, will very likely continue to result in impacts that are not compatible with management of the area for its wilderness values.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.



D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The Grass Valley WSA is located in the BLM Red Mountain Geology-Energy-Mineral (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M data in the wilderness section of the CDCA plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) stated that there were no known mineral prospects or occurrences in this WSA. The EIS did indicate that based on local rocktypes, (rhyolitic plugs in granitic rocks) there may be a potential for porphyry-type copper deposits. As of December 12, 1979, there were no unpatented mining claims located in the WSA.

The data from the 1980 BLM GRA file was incomplete and no assessment of mineral potential was made for locatable, saleable and leasable minerals. The GRA file data does not support the EIS statement since the WSA was unclassified due to incomplete and insufficient data.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the preliminary suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final recommendation: No U.S. Bureau of Mines or U.S. Geologic Survey mineral surveys were conducted for the WSA because it is recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation. No additional information is available as of February, 1988.

As of December, 1987, there were no mining claims on record with the BLM for this WSA. A mineral resource potential map was not prepared.

E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Noise, surface disturbances and access requirements for mineral exploration and development will negatively impact naturalness, solitude, and primitive and unconfined types of recreation. The mineral potential of the area is unknown and any development will primarily affect site specific areas. Off-highway vehicle travel through the area will continue to adversely impact solitude. Continued maintenance of the range improvements will adversely impact naturalness and opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation.
2. Impact on Mineral Exploration and Development: The mineral potential of the WSA is unknown. However, opportunities for exploration and development will continue to be available subject to applicable laws, regulations and the low intensity, multiple use management guidelines established in the CDCA Plan.
3. Impacts on Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation: Opportunities for motorized recreation on designated routes of travel will continue to be available within the area.



4. Impact on Habitat for the Desert Tortoise and the Mohave Ground Squirrel: Given that there is little likelihood for mineral development in the WSA, and the low intensity land use prescriptions for the area, there are no significant adverse impacts anticipated.
5. Impact on Cultural Resources: The low intensity land use prescriptions for the area will further compliment the existing laws and regulations that protect and preserve cultural resource values.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: The two comments which were received stated that the area should not be designated wilderness because it did not provide opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined types of recreation.
2. Study Phase: Only two comments were received, both of which were opposed to wilderness for this area. One letter stressed the visible effects of long-time cattle grazing. The other listed the evidences of man's activities, which detract from the wilderness experience. Included were the use of adjacent lands by the military for weapons testing, army reserve training, and gunnery exercises, as well as the disturbance from frequent overflights of low-flying military aircraft.

No comments were received in response to the Public Input Workbook (3/15/79).

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: Few public comments specific to this WSA were received in response to the Draft Plan Alternatives. However, this WSA was one of those opposed by the National Outdoor Coalition, a coalition of mining, rock-hounding, and off-road vehicle groups. A large number of club members sent in printed coupons supporting a multiple use designation of "moderate use" for this WSA which was in agreement with the recommendation of the Use Alternative. Wilderness proponents preferred the Protection Alternative which recommended "limited use" classification or else asked that this area be recommended for wilderness.



4. Proposed Plan: There were no specific comments on this WSA in response to the Proposed Plan, which recommended a "limited use" classification for this area. Conservationists were unsatisfied because they wanted a wilderness recommendation; motorized vehicle-oriented recreationists were also displeased since they wanted "moderated use." These opinions were expressed in generalized comments by both types of organizations and individuals.

No comments were received from local governments.



# **Black Mountain**

*CDCA 186C*







## BLACK MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-186C)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA ---

14,983 acres

The Black Mountain WSA is located in San Bernardino County within the west central portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The community of Barstow is 18 miles to the southeast. The WSA includes 8,986 acres of public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), 622 acres owned by the State of California, and 5,375 acres of private land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northwestern and western boundary of the WSA is Black Canyon Road and the southern boundary trends southeast and generally follows the lower edge of a basalt face. Section lines and several dry washes make up the eastern and northeastern boundaries, respectively. Portions of the WSA are also within a future California utility corridor planned for 1990-2020, as stated in the Western Regional Corridor Study (1).

The WSA primarily encompasses Black Mountain which consists of a large area of exposed basalt rising approximately 1,900 feet from the desert floor. The mountain is nearly black with sparse shrub vegetation where accumulations of soil occur. The south side of this flat-topped mountain rises abruptly from the alluvium north of Harper Lake, as does the west side from Black Canyon. The northern and eastern sides fade more gradually with systems of basalt dikes, ending at Superior Valley and the Opal Mountain areas. At the southeastern corner of the WSA is a deposit of fine-grained Holocene dune sand blown from Harper Lake. The dune is in sharp contrast to the nearly black basalt of Black Mountain. Elevations range from approximately 2,100 feet in the valley floor to 3,939 feet at Black Mountain. The vegetative composition includes a typical creosote bush scrub plant assemblage that exhibits some variability based on elevations.

Portions of the WSA are within the Black Mountain Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The ACEC contains some of the more spectacular rock art sites within the CDCA.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced, and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0 acres recommended for wilderness

8,986 BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness



No wilderness is the recommendation for the Black Mountain WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts. Under this recommendation, future activities in the area will be controlled by low intensity management guidelines.

The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan and further explained in the California Wilderness Study Overview.

Current recreational uses, potential for minerals, land ownership patterns, and potential for development of a planned utility corridor, are of greater importance than the area's value as wilderness. Designation of the area as wilderness would not contribute any additional unique or distinct features to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Other similar WSAs in the California Desert that are recommended suitable offer a more extensive and diverse representation of desert wilderness values. There are approximately 10 miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.

Historically, the area is very popular for vehicle-dependant recreation, especially camping, rock climbing, hunting and rockhounding. Use levels are considered moderate. Rock specimens known to occur are opalite, blue opal, jasper, and agate. All land within the WSA was classified in 1972 as "Calico Recreation Land" because of its existing and potential recreation uses.

There is commercial energy and mineral interest in the area. However, virtually the entire WSA is covered with a thick basalt cap which effectively masks the mineral wealth of the area. Active interest and exploration for zeolites and borates continues in and around the WSA.

Existing land ownership patterns substantially limit the ability of BLM to manage the area as wilderness. Approximately 42% of the WSA is non-public land. The entire WSA is within a "checkerboard" pattern of land ownership. Virtually every other section of land (640 acres) is not under the jurisdiction of the BLM. The northern portion of the WSA does not contain 5,000 acres of contiguous public land. The southern portion of the WSA contains over 5,000 acres of contiguous public land but it is interspersed with a scattering of private and state land. The State of California owns one parcel and ownership of the other inholdings, a minimum of 11 parcels, has not been researched.

The impacts of designating the area as wilderness have potential to conflict with development and use of future communication and energy transmission facilities. The WSA is within a future utility corridor (1990-2020) for the State of California as identified in the Western Regional Corridor Study (1980). Designation of WSA 186C as wilderness could necessitate relocating the corridor. Depending upon the juxtaposition of the WSAs ultimately designated wilderness within the CDCA, there may or may not be constraints



to long-term energy and communication transmission in the southwestern United States.

Wilderness designation would also limit options for livestock management within the area. The southwestern quarter of the WSA is within the Harper Lake Grazing Allotment. The allotment Management Plan (AMP) was signed in 1984 and a management fence is proposed within the WSA boundaries.

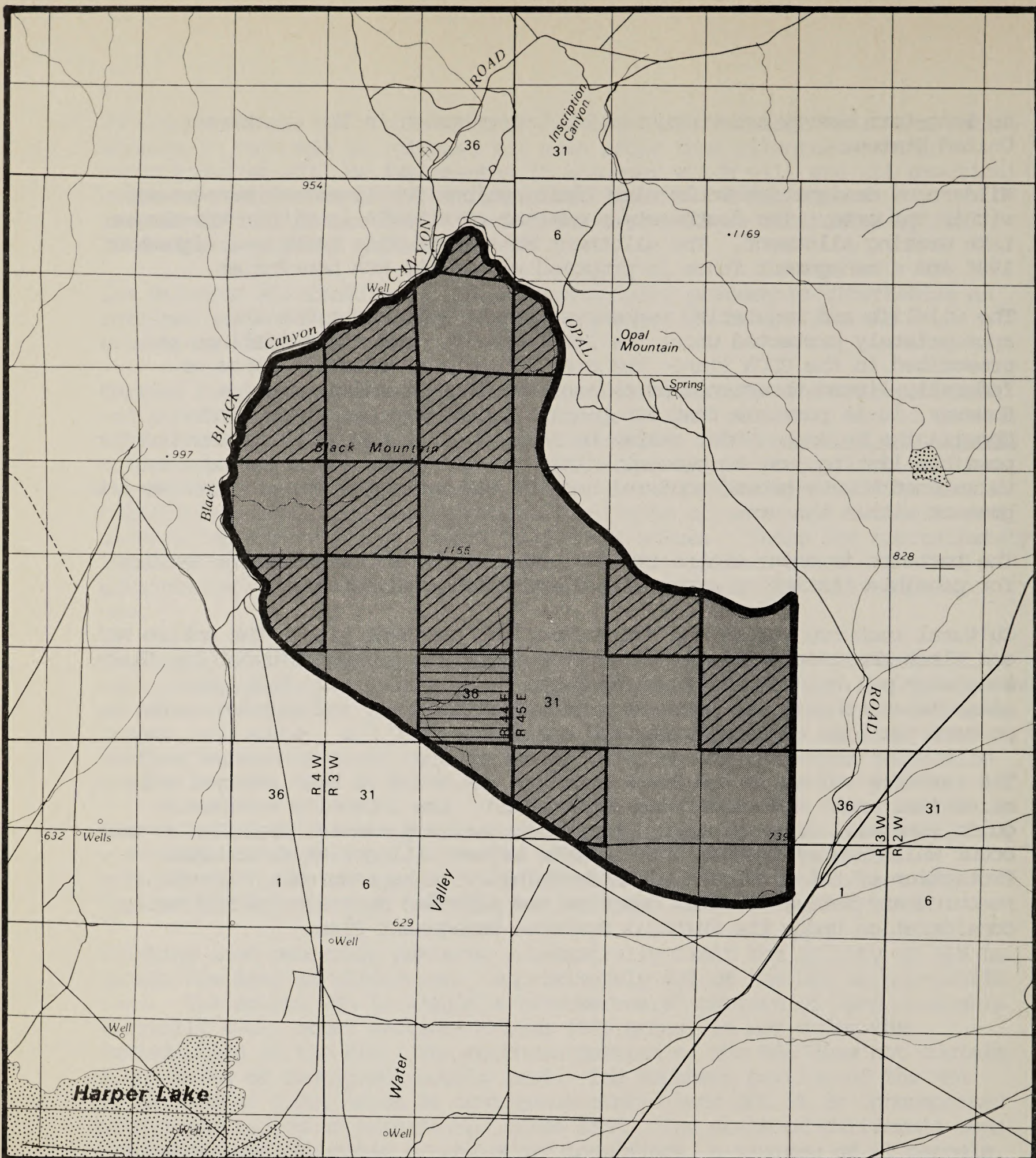
The wildlife and vegetative resources present within the WSA are appropriately protected under the low intensity land use guidelines as prescribed in the CDCA Plan. The area contains no unusual plants or federally-listed threatened or endangered plant or animal species. However, it is possible that two plants, Eriophyllum mohavense and Chorizanthe spinosa, under review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for possible listing, may be present within the WSA. The state-listed threatened Mohave ground squirrel and the BLM sensitive desert tortoise are present within the area.

The tortoise is under status review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for possible listing as a threatened and endangered species.

Cultural resource values and Native American concerns within the entire WSA and Black Mountain ACEC are currently managed and protected under the Black Mountain-Opal Mountain Cultural Resource Management Plan. This plan establishes vehicle use patterns, interpretive sites, and signing needs to protect the high quality values and concerns.

The resource values in the Black Mountain WSA would be best managed and maintained under non-wilderness designation. Low intensity management guidelines will allow historic recreation uses and mineral exploration to occur while assuring sensitive resource values will not be diminished. Protection of botanical and wildlife values will be assured. Cultural resource and Native American concerns are afforded necessary additional consideration under the Cultural Resource Management Plan.





NONE

RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS

RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS

LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS

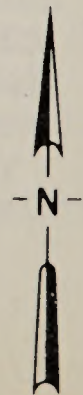
SPLIT ESTATE

STATE

PRIVATE

**Black Mountain  
Proposal  
MAP-1**

0 1 2 3  
MILES



CDCA-186C  
JUNE, 1988



TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	8,986
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		622
Private		5,375
Total		14983
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	8,986
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		8,986

### 3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

#### A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The northern portion of the WSA, though relatively undisturbed by man, does not contain 5,000 acres of contiguous public land. The west-central and southern portion of the WSA contains at least 5,000 acres of contiguous public land, but it is interspersed within a scattering of private and state land. This portion of the WSA generally retains its primeval character.
2. Solitude: A series of ridges and canyons across the uplifted basalt area of Black Mountain itself provides isolation and opportunities for solitude. Visual screening is however limited due to the general lack of vegetation.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and



associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The diversity and uneven surface does provide opportunities for a variety of primitive and unconfined types of recreation. These opportunities are severely limited by the large blocks of private land throughout the entire WSA.
4. Special Features: Approximately 13% of the total WSA acreage is included within the Black Mountain ACEC. The ACEC and entire WSA are within the management boundaries for the Black Mountain - Opal Mountain Cultural Resource Management Plan. Black Canyon itself contains spectacular rock art sites and the area is of mythological importance to Native Americans. The plan establishes routes of travel and management prescriptions to protect Native American concerns and the area's cultural resources.

The desert tortoise is present over the entire area at densities of 20 to 50 per square mile. The CDCA Plan designated this area for low intensity, multiple use management primarily to protect tortoise habitat.

#### B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 8,986 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush ecosystem. The Black Mountain WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems within the National Wilderness Preservation System. The ecosystem is well represented in the other WSAs in the CDCA that are recommended suitable.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,258,923
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,645,119

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of 10 major



population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	46,790
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria-				
Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
San Diego	15	1,043,680	100	3,378,814
Visalia-Tulare-				
Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of six BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness area is San Gorgonio Wilderness, administered by the San Bernardino National Forest, 70 miles south of the WSA.

#### C. Manageability

The Black Mountain WSA is manageable as wilderness. However, unless there are considerable changes in the land ownership patterns and current uses, these issues would seriously complicate the ability to maintain wilderness values into the future.

Over 40% of the WSA is non-public land. The northern portion of the WSA does not contain 5,000 acres of contiguous public land. Although the remaining portion of the WSA does contain 5,000 acres of contiguous land, this land is not in a "blocked" ownership pattern. Management of either or both of these portions of the WSA as wilderness would be very difficult. Development and use of the private inholdings would be virtually impossible without road construction. The private inholdings permeate the whole area and therefore any access or development would seriously degrade the naturalness of the entire WSA.



BLM has entered into an agreement with the Department of Defense to evaluate checkerboard ownership patterns in the California Desert including the Black Mountain area. The outcome is uncertain and will depend upon the willingness of private landholders to exchange their properties for other federal lands away from the area proximate to Edwards and George Air Force Bases.

Purchase and/or exchange of the private inholdings may not be a realistic option to prevent degradation of wilderness values. The acreages are high and the costs would be significant. Also, during the time required to initiate and complete acquisition for specific parcels, uses not compatible with wilderness may occur on the other parcels. The wilderness integrity of the entire could not be assured.

The impacts of a vehicle closure if the area were designated wilderness are considered significant. Historically, the area has been popular for both motorized and non-motorized recreation. Camping and rockhounding are popular activities and opportunities for hunting are rated fair. Management guidelines in the Black Mountain-Opal Mountain Cultural Resource Management Plan establish vehicle use patterns and management prescriptions to protect the area's cultural resource values and Native American concerns.

The exposed basalt of Black Mountain has long attracted the interest of rockhounders, professional geologists and national mining corporations. However, the mineral wealth that lies beneath the basalt cap remains an intriguing mystery.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

#### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The Black Mountain WSA is located in the BLM Calico Mountains Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M data in the wilderness portion of the Desert Plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) indicated in 1980 that known resources in this area included a zeolite deposit located in the northernmost part of the area, a uranium locality, and jasper veins located at the mouth of Black Canyon. The EIS indicated that within the sedimentary rocks along the edges of the WSA there was potential for economic deposits of uranium. There was also potential for deposits of pumicite, bentonite, and magnesite. Speculative potential existed for oil and gas. The 1980 EIS indicated that there was also an unclassified potential for the occurrence of zeolites in the WSA. In the WSA, no unpatented claims had been filed with the BLM as of December 12, 1979.



The 1980 Calico Mountains GRA report classified the northern part of WSA as having moderate potential for the occurrence of zeolites based on known occurrences, one near the northwestern edge, and the other on the northern edge of the WSA. The GRA file did not indicate any known potential occurrences of pumicite, bentonite, or magnetite within the WSA. The GRA file classified WSA as having moderate potential for the occurrence of oil and gas based on the 1978 U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) prospectively valuable classification for oil and gas.

Areas of moderate potential for the occurrence of silica collected by rockhounds (jasper and agate) was identified in the 1980 GRA file in the western and northeastern edges of the WSA. The 1980 GRA file classified the northern part of WSA as having a low potential for the occurrence of uranium/thorium resources.

Sheppard and Gude (1964, Reconnaissance of Zeolite Deposits in Tuffaceous Rocks of the Western Mojave Desert and Vicinity, California, USGS Professional Paper 501-C, pages 114-116) indicated that the occurrence of tuff beds more than a foot thick and containing at least 80 percent zeolite were located outside the WSA boundary. One of the occurrences identified in the 1980 GRA near the northwest boundary of the WSA, as shown on the geologic map (Dibblee, 1968, Geology of the Fremont Peak and Opal Mountain Quadrangles, California, California Division of Mines and Geology Bull. 188, Pl.1), was sampled by a BLM geologist (Schulte) in 1978 and tested by a BLM industrial minerals specialist (Regis) by x-ray diffraction. Results of the analysis of the sample indicated that the deposit was mostly volcanic glass. Under the BLM classification system, the deposit can only be considered as low potential for the occurrence of zeolite resources based on geologic inference. The other occurrence in the northern tip of the WSA has not been sampled, therefore the 1980 GRA classification remains moderate potential for occurrence as indicated on the accompanying map.

Based on the BLM classification system, oil and gas potential for occurrence is considered low because the area is not near the potential overthrust belt potential, and no known favorable source beds for oil and gas are known to occur near the WSA.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the preliminary suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final recommendation: No USGS or U.S. Bureau of Mines mineral survey was conducted for this WSA because it is recommended non-suitable for wilderness designation.

In 1986, Tenneco Minerals took a 1,400-pound sample for zeolite testing on the southeast slope of Opal Mountain. This is from the same formation as Pickhandle (tuff) formation and only one mile southeast of similar beds in the WSA.



The WSA has an unknown potential for the occurrence of borate minerals. A small, subcommercial deposit of colemanite was found in test holes drilled by the USGS near Kramer Junction, about 17 miles southwest of the WSA. In 1983, U.S. Borax and Chemical Corporation filed a plan of operations for three drill holes just outside of the southern and southeastern edges of the WSA. In 1984, Kerr-McGee filed a plan of operation for five drill holes, three of them in the WSA and two of them just outside of the WSA. So far, borate minerals have not been found, the potential for occurrence there remains unknown.

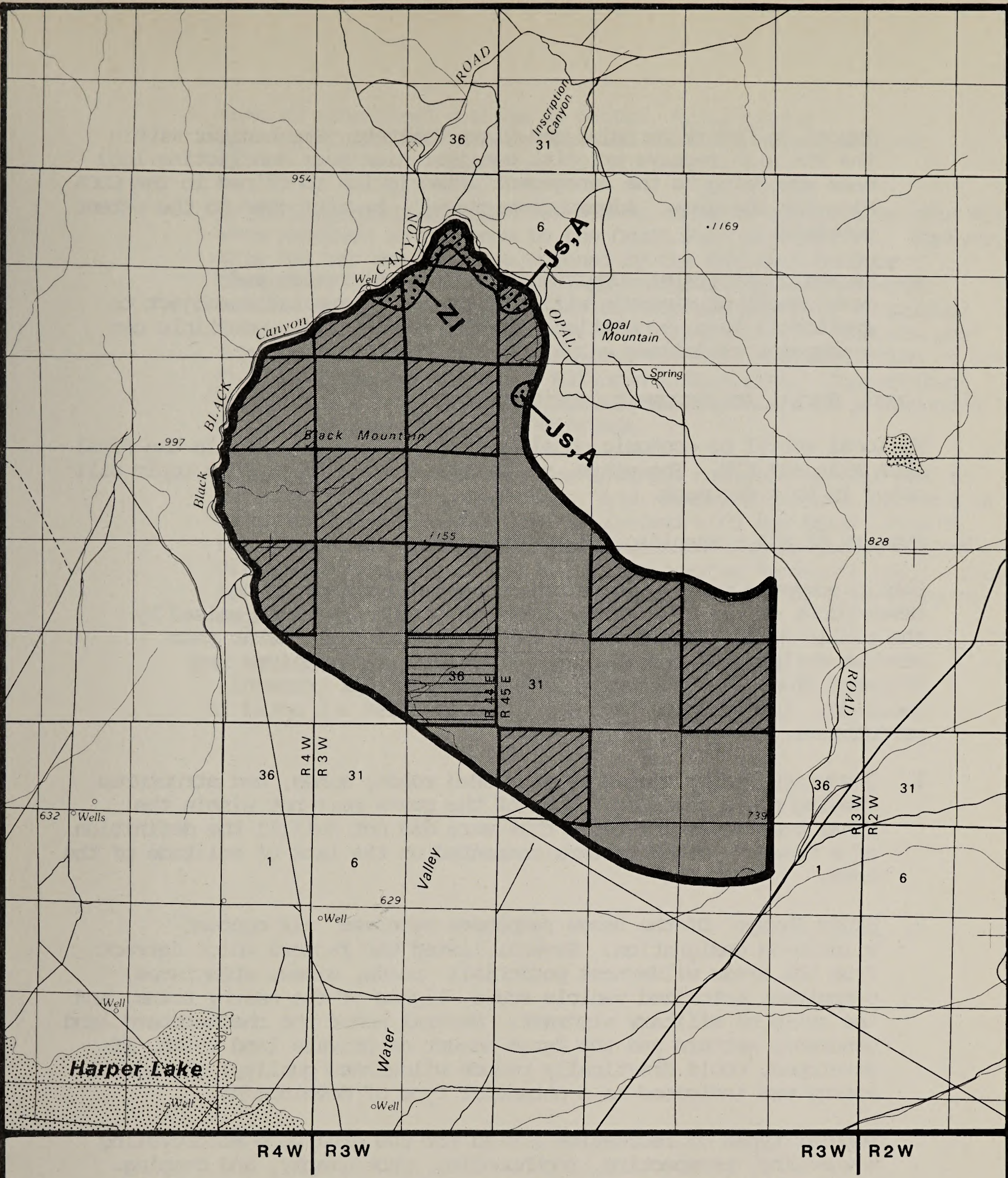
There has been no known mineral production within the WSA other than rockhound collecting.

Mineral interest is high based upon borate exploration in and around the WSA. No unpatented mining claims were recorded with the BLM as of December 15, 1987.

E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Noise, surface disturbance and access requirements for mineral exploration and development will adversely impact naturalness, solitude, and primitive and unconfined types of recreation. On Black Mountain itself, these impacts will be compounded because of a lack of vegetative and topographic screening. The most detrimental impacts to wilderness values will occur as a result of development and use of the vast amount of private inholdings. Military aircraft engaged in low-level maneuvers will continue to momentarily disrupt solitude.
2. Impact on Future Utility Corridor Development: A portion of the WSA is within a planned utility corridor (1990-2020) as identified in the Western Regional Corridor Study (1980) for the State of California. This corridor was not identified or designated in the CDCA Plan. Depending upon the juxtaposition of the WSAs ultimately designated wilderness within the CDCA, there may or may not be constraints to future corridor development.





**NONE** Recommended for Wilderness

Recommended for Non Wilderness

Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness

Split Estate

State

Private

**Explanation**

High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals

Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals

**M** Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area

**H** High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area

**Commodity Symbols**

**A** Agate

**Js** Jasper

**ZI** Zeolite

**Black Mountain**

**Mineral Resource Potential**

0 1 2 3

MILES

**MAP-2**

**CDCA-186C**



3. Impact on Desert Tortoise and Plant Habitat: The habitat within the WSA will receive priority consideration over conflicting land uses according to the management prescription contained in the CDCA Plan for the area. Adverse impacts will be mitigated to the extent possible.
4. Impact on Minerals: Opportunities for exploration and development of minerals will continue to be available subject to applicable laws, regulations and the low intensity, multiple use management guidelines established in the CDCA Plan.

F. Local, Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: Comments mentioned roads, mines, and structures showing man's presence. Most of the roads were not within the final boundaries and those that were did not fulfill the definition of a "road." Other letters commented on the lack of solitude of the area.
2. Study Phase: Of the seven responses received, six opposed wilderness designation. Several listed the factors which detract from the areas wilderness potential: roads, mines, structures, campsites, motorized vehicle scars, lights of the nearby towns, and the noise of military aircraft. Several noted the checkerboard land ownership pattern and the large amount of private land which, if developed, could drastically reduce wilderness quality; geothermal energy was indicated as a potential type of development.

Popular types of recreation listed for the area were motorcycling 4-wheeling, prospecting, rockhounding, photography, and camping. One letter noted that only experienced mountain climbers should attempt the basalt cliffs. It was also noted the "Interim Critical Management Plan" already designated the area as "designated roads and trails" and that it should stay that way.

The one letter supporting wilderness designation mentioned the area's interesting topography and the large number of desert animals which residing in the area. The respondent indicated



that an endangered species of cactus, Sclerocactus polyancistrus was also present. He wanted them all to have the protection of wilderness classification.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: Few public comments specific to this WSA were received in response to the Draft Plan Alternative. However, this WSA was one of those opposed by the National Outdoor Coalition, a coalition of mining, rockhounding, and off-road vehicle groups. A large number of club members sent in printed forms supporting a multiple use classification of "moderate use" for this WSA which was in agreement with the recommendation of both the Use Alternative and the Balanced Alternative. Conservation groups preferred the Protection Alternative since it recommended wilderness designation for this WSA.
4. Proposed Plan: There were few specific comments on this WSA in response to the Proposed Plan. Both conservationists and vehicle oriented recreationists were displeased with the Desert Plan's recommendation of "limited use," since the former groups wanted a wilderness designation and the latter wanted "moderate use." These opinions were expressed in generalized comments by both types of organizations and individuals.

No comments were received from local governments.







# **Newberry Mountains**

*CDCA 206*







## NEWBERRY MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-206)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA --- 35,343 acres

The Newberry Mountains WSA is located in San Bernardino County in the central portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The city of Barstow is 15 miles to the west. The WSA includes 24,369 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), 647 acres owned by the State of California and 10,327 acres of private land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA is bounded on the north by the southernmost edge of a series of water control diversion dikes along Interstate 40. The western boundary is a pipeline right-of-way and Camp Rock Road. The center portion of this boundary deviates from the road to avoid surface disturbances associated with Azucar Mine. The southern boundary follows no specific identifiable feature until it intersects, and then follows, the Kane Wash Road. The eastern boundary follows section lines except where it deviates to avoid surface impacts associated with a road. Section lines also make up the northeastern boundary.

The area is noted for its rugged mountains that are characterized by numerous multi-colored escarpments, maze-like deep canyons and topography that ranges from 2,200 feet in the north end of the WSA to 5,100 feet in the south end. The assemblage of escarpments, canyons, and peaks within the WSA is the result of Tertiary-age volcanic activity and sedimentary rocks. The WSA contains a creosote bush scrub type of plant assemblage that is highly diverse in composition, varying in response to moisture availability, slope, aspect, soil, and elevation. The Newberry Mountains WSA contains approximately 70% hills, 15% alluvial fans, 10% dissected fans, and 5% highly dissected fans.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced, and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE --- 27,710 acres recommended for wilderness 4,078 BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

Partial wilderness (80% suitable) is the recommendation for the Newberry Mountains WSA. The BLM recommends that 20291 acres be included in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). The other 4,078 acres in this WSA recommended nonsuitable are released for uses other than



wilderness. In addition to the Federal acreage recommended for wilderness, BLM recommends that 647 acres of State land and 6,772 acres of private land be acquired through exchange or purchase and designated as wilderness. With acquisition of these inholdings, a total of 27,710 acres are recommended for wilderness. Appendix 1 lists all inholdings and provides additional information on their acquisition. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally-preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan and further explained in the California Wilderness Study Overview.

The recommended suitable portion of the Newberry Mountains WSA possesses outstanding wilderness character that exemplifies the quality of criteria described in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964. The area represents a rugged, primitive landscape that is exempt from permanent improvements, routes of travel, and mining scars. Landforms present in the WSA vary from scenic escarpments and calico-colored, craggy peaks, to secluded valleys and deep canyons. The Newberry Mountains contain many atypical geological features. Such features are unusual because they are exposed and readily visible for study and viewing. Scenic values in the WSA are rated high because of the area's visually unique landforms in association with the calico-colored rock formations and soils.

Opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation are outstanding and include backpacking, day hiking, peak climbing, photography, and studying the important wildlife and vegetative habitats of the WSA. These opportunities are available to any user, and limit the user only by their own degree of endurance and outdoor skills. The WSA currently receives low recreational use. The use that does occur is associated with hiking, peak climbing, rock hounding, and nature studying. In addition, opportunities for extended backpacking trips will be increased if the adjacent recommended suitable portion of the Rodman Mountains WSA, is designated wilderness. Due to the area's ruggedness, secluded valleys, deep canyons, and vegetative diversity, opportunities to escape "human influences" are outstanding. Because wilderness values are so significant, the suitability recommendation will preclude any further vehicular use of approximately 11.5 miles of primitive access routes of travel.

Acquisition of inholdings, approximately 25% of the suitable area, is considered essential but not a serious obstacle to management of the area as wilderness. The State of California and the Southern Pacific Land Company own 87% of the inholdings and historically have been very cooperative with BLM to "block" land ownership patterns. Southern Pacific Land Company, in a letter to the BLM in 1982, expressed a willingness to exchange their inholdings within the portion recommended for wilderness designation. Purchase of the remaining 13% of the private inholdings will also be essential for maintaining the area's wilderness integrity.

Outstanding wilderness values exceed the identified mineral resources. Moderate to high potentials for silver, gold, and rock products encompass less than 25% of the suitable portion.



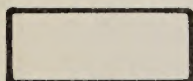
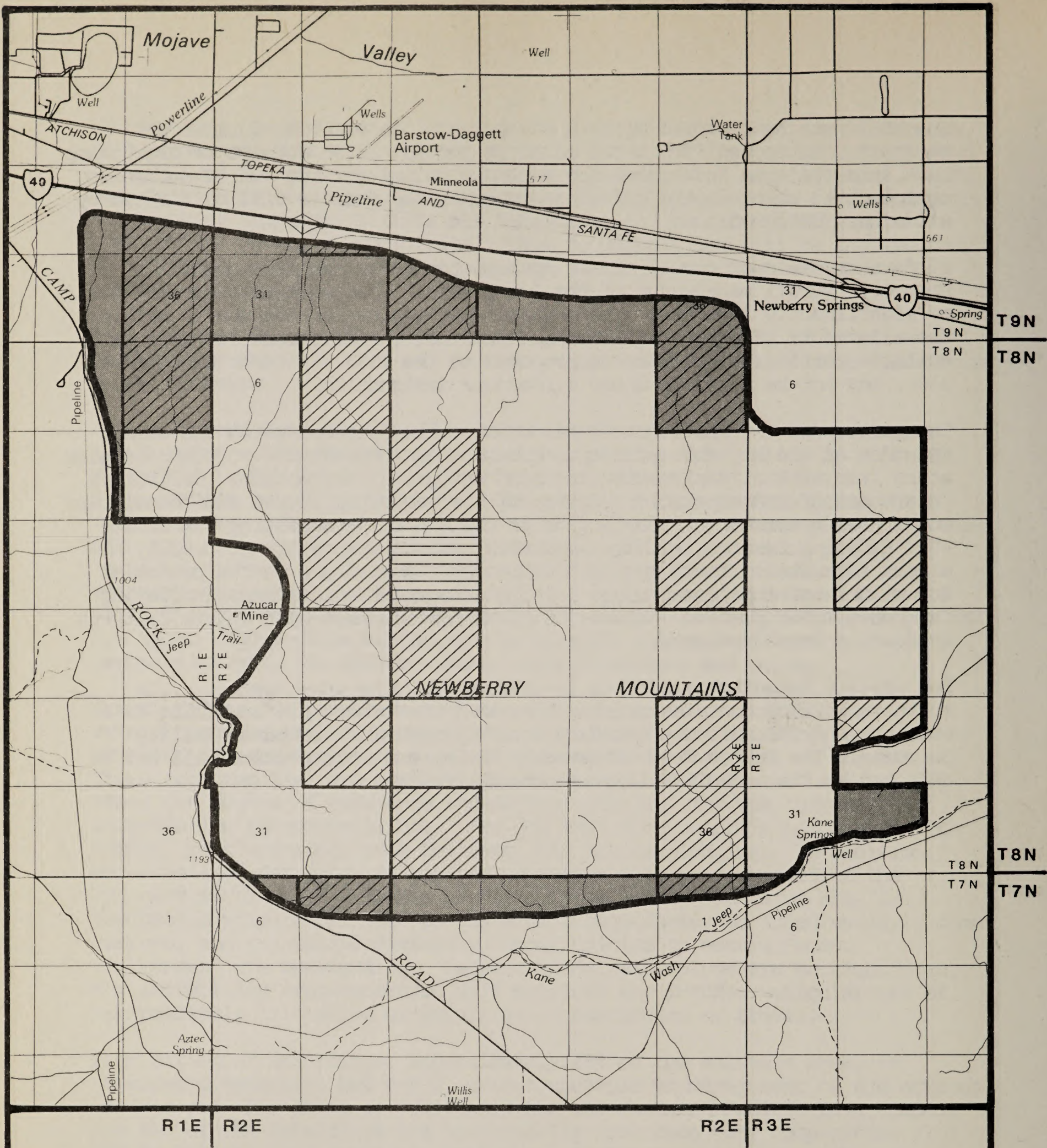
The WSA contains historic bighorn sheep range. A watering guzzler was recently constructed within the suitable portion in an attempt to draw sheep back into the area on a permanent basis. Options for the use of mechanized equipment to maintain the existing bighorn sheep guzzler will be limited by wilderness designation.

Wilderness designation will limit options for livestock management. However, overall management of the Ord Mountain Grazing Allotment will not be significantly impacted. The southern one-quarter of the WSA is within the allotment. Fencing the northern border of the allotment within the suitable portion of the WSA, as proposed in the 1985 allotment management plan, may not be possible under wilderness designation.

The portion of the WSA recommended non-suitable does not match the scenic splendor of the suitable portion. The northern nonsuitable portion contains scars from mineral exploration and sand and gravel extraction. California Department of Transportation (CalTrans) has requested to use additional sand and gravel reserves in this portion of the WSA for resurfacing Interstate 40. Existing reserves within reasonable haul distances of the freeway are almost exhausted. Their request was recently denied due to the potential for wilderness impairment under interim management guidelines. Releasing the nonsuitable portion for uses other than wilderness will enable Caltrans to develop these reserves.

The eastern nonsuitable portion is considered to be unmanageable. The southern portion contains private land that the owners are unwilling to exchange and the suitable boundary was "squared off" for manageability purposes. The Public Water Reserve in the nonsuitable portion will not be affected by the nonsuitability recommendation.





RECOMMENDED FOR  
WILDERNESS



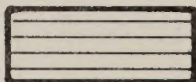
RECOMMENDED FOR  
NONWILDERNESS



LAND OUTSIDE WSA  
RECOMMENDED FOR  
WILDERNESS



SPLIT ESTATE



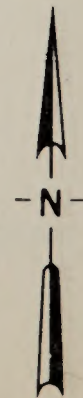
STATE



PRIVATE

**Newberry Mountains  
Proposal  
MAP-1**

0 1 2 3  
MILES



CDCA-206  
JUNE, 1988



TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	24,369
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		647
Private		10,327
Total		<u>35,343</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	20,291
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>20,291</u>
Inholdings <sup>1</sup>		
State		647
Private		6,772
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	4,078
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>4,078</u>

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1 is a detailed description of inholdings and split estate tracts included within the study. For purposes of this report, split estate lands are defined only as those lands with Federal surface and non Federal subsurface (minerals). Lands that have Federal minerals but non Federal surface should be classified in this report by the owner of the surface estate.



3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The Newberry Mountains WSA is essentially void of human intrusions and affected primarily by the forces of nature. Those few intrusions which do exist are located in the recommended nonsuitable portion and include impacts from mineral exploration and development. The suitable portion of the WSA is characterized by pristine, rugged, calico-colored escarpments, craggy peaks, and secluded valleys and canyons.
2. Solitude: The vistas from atop the Newberry Mountain's prominent peaks offer the feeling of being "on top of the world," while the area's secluded valleys and deep canyons offer an outstanding opportunity to escape the rest of humanity. Opportunities for solitude in the northern nonsuitable bajada are limited due to lack of topographic and vegetative screening.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: Opportunities are outstanding for primitive recreation. Opportunities include day hiking, peak climbing, backpacking, nature studying and photographing the area's outstanding scenery. In addition, several peaks have sign-in registers.
4. Special Features: The Newberry Mountains contain historic desert bighorn habitat. Recently the California Department of Fish and Game constructed a water guzzler in the suitable portion to attempt to draw sheep back into the area on a permanent basis. The suitable portion of the WSA also contains prairie falcon and golden eagle eyries and foraging habitat.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 24,369 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush ecosystem. Although this ecosystem is already represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System, the Newberry Mountains are considered a particularly good representation of this ecosystem, especially given the fact that it is so close to major metropolitan population centers.



Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,243,540
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,629,736

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of nine major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria-Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
San Diego	15	1,043,680	100	3,378,814
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of six BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness area is San Geronio Wilderness, administered by the San Bernardino National Forest, 40 miles south of the WSA.



### C. Manageability

The recommended suitable portion of the Newberry Mountains WSA is manageable as wilderness. Acquisition of the private and state inholdings will be essential for control of the boundary and to ensure uniformity of management philosophy. The majority of the suitable boundary follows legal section lines rather than following specific topographic or political features. Maintenance of such a boundary will require special demarkation and enforcement patrols.

Twelve mining claims encumber 360 acres of the recommended suitable portion. Development of any valid, existing mineral rights has the potential to seriously degrade the high quality wilderness values. However, there are no current mining plans of operations in the WSA.

Presently, one big game guzzler for desert bighorn sheep is located in the suitable portion of the Newberry Range WSA. Maintenance of this guzzler is required approximately two times per year and normally requires repair of tanks and catchments after flash floods. Use of mechanized equipment is sometimes required to maintain the site. Presently, an agreement with the California Department of Fish and Game allows for the use of mechanized equipment for transportation to the site. Transportation is normally via helicopter or a four-wheel drive vehicle in wash systems. After wilderness designation, determinations will need to be made on the use of mechanized equipment.

The nonsuitable portions of the WSA contain surface disturbances that, due to the arid desert environment, will impact naturalness for the long-term. Also, in the near future, pressure may be brought to bear by Caltrans to develop the sand and gravel reserves in the nonsuitable portion for resurfacing the Interstate Highway. The southern portion of the WSA that is recommended nonsuitable contains private land that the owner is unwilling to sell or exchange.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The Newberry Mountains WSA (CDCA-206) is located in the BLM Rodman Mountains Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M data in the wilderness portion of the Desert Plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) indicated in 1980, that the area of highest mineral potential (undefined) was the Lucky Don Juan Mine, within 0.25 miles of the southeast corner of the WSA, which had been explored for gold, tungsten, and uranium. The EIS stated that there was potential for buried deposits of borates on the north slope of the Newberry Mountains.



The 1980 GRA file assessed the area surrounding the Lucky Don Juan Mine as having moderate potential for the occurrence of iron, silver, and uranium. The silver occurrence is not explained. However, the draft GRA report stated in 1980 that gold and tungsten were reportedly the economic minerals in these skarn deposits and that iron deposits occur at the contact of the Paleozoic-age sediments and the Mesozoic-age intrusives. GRA file indicated in 1980, an area of moderate potential for the occurrence of gold in the recommended suitable southwestern part of the WSA where there is a shaft a quarter of a mile northwest of the Camp Rock Fault. The area north of the Camp Rock Fault had experienced widespread, intense hydrothermal activity and metallic mineralization based on geochemical and field evidence in the 1980 GRA file. The 1980 GRA indicated moderate potential for the occurrence of iron and manganese in the recommended suitable northeastern part of the WSA based on known occurrences. Manganese occurs as oxides in fractured volcanic intrusive rocks (andesite) in the Newberry Mountains. The GRA report did not describe the iron occurrences; however, iron and manganese are commonly associated with one another in similar geologic environments in the area. The GRA report indicated a moderate potential for the occurrence of sand and gravel resources in the northwest part of the WSA based on past production from pits along Interstate 40. The northern part of the WSA is prospectively valuable (moderate potential) for sodium based on the 1978 U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) classification.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the preliminary suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final recommendation: USGS and the U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) conducted a mineral survey of the portion of the WSA recommended suitable for wilderness designation during the period 1983 to 1985. A report was published by the BOM describing mineral resources of the WSA in 1985 (open file report MLA-27-85). The mineral potential for the portion of the WSA recommended suitable for wilderness designation was assessed in a joint report, Bulletin 1712-A, published by USGS and BOM in 1987. Bulletin 1712-A concluded that although there were no currently or formerly productive mineral deposits, the portion of the WSA recommended suitable for wilderness designation has localized potential for undiscovered mineral resources.

The accompanying map shows that a moderate potential for occurrence was assessed in Bulletin 1712-A for undiscovered epithermal vein gold and silver deposits in a zone crossing the western margin of the study area. The zone contains intersecting faults, a linear aeromagnetic anomaly, altered rocks, veins, geochemical anomalies for gold and silver, and a mine with a history of minor gold production (Azucar Mine, 0.7 miles west of the study area).



A second zone, which straddles the eastern margin of the WSA was assessed in Bulletin 1712-A as having moderate potential for the occurrence of undiscovered silver resources based on a broad zone of altered rocks with barium and silver geochemical anomalies and potassium alteration (secondary feldspar). The geologic environment is similar to mineralized areas of the Calico Mountains ten miles to the northwest where \$17 million worth of silver was produced in 1881-1896. The report concluded that manganese-bearing veins within the WSA are too small to constitute mineral resources under present or foreseeable future market conditions. USGS/BOM sample data for two prospects in the southeastern portion of the WSA, identified in the 1980 GRA as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of silver, is now classified as low under the BLM classification system. One prospect within the WSA contained no significant values. The other prospect, about one mile southeast of the WSA, contained small amounts of gold, silver, and tungsten; however, the report stated that "similar geology does not occur within the study area." A sample was taken by the BOM from a shaft in the area assessed by BLM as having moderate potential for the occurrence of gold in the southwestern part of the WSA in the 1980 GRA. No significant mineral values were found; therefore, the 1980 BLM moderate classification should be reduced to "low."

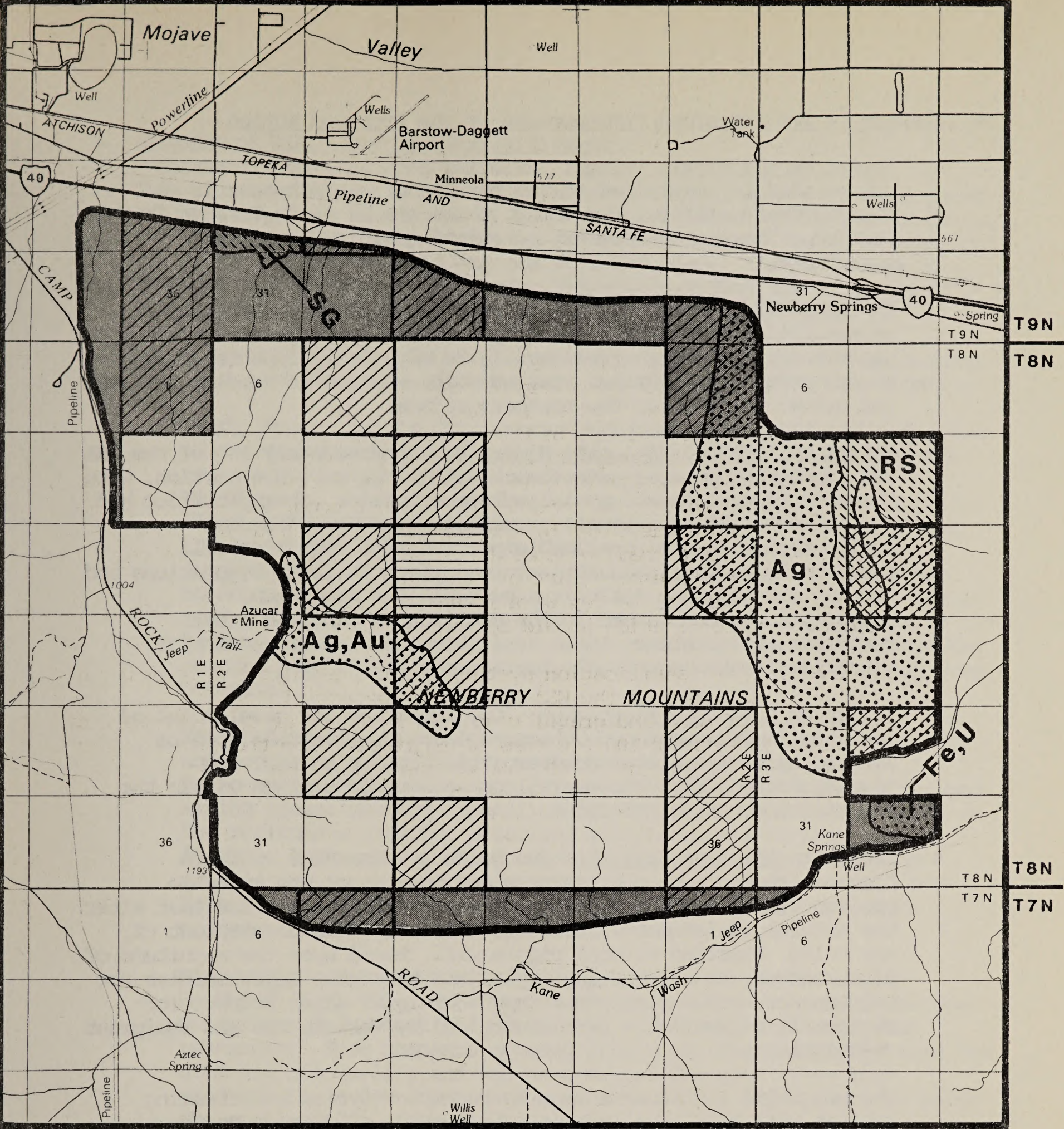
Under the BLM classification system, about one-third square mile in the northwest part of the WSA has a high potential for the occurrence of sand and gravel resources based on an application from Caltrans to extract 100,000 tons of aggregate from the site for the maintenance of Interstate 40. About one and one-half square miles in the eastern part of the WSA has high potential for the occurrence of andesite suitable for roofing granules and railroad ballast based on three producing quarries operating in this same rock unit within a mile of the WSA boundary. The two roofing granule quarries were operating in 1980. In 1987, McKee Products began operating a quarry with a capacity in excess of one million tons per year of finished ballast products from this formation.

Unpatented mining claims in the WSA are summarized in the following table taken from BLM records dated December 1987.

Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE MINING CLAIM	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
Lode	6	0	6	120	0	120
Placer	6	0	6	240	0	240
Mill Site	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	12	0	12	360	0	360





<p> Recommended for Wilderness</p> <p> Recommended for Non Wilderness</p> <p> Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness</p> <p> Split Estate</p> <p> State</p> <p> Private</p>	<p><b>Explanation</b></p> <p> High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals</p> <p> Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals</p> <p><b>M</b> Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area</p> <p><b>H</b> High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area</p>	<p><b>Commodity Symbols</b></p> <p><b>Ag</b> Silver</p> <p><b>Au</b> Gold</p> <p><b>Fe</b> Iron</p> <p><b>U</b> Uranium</p> <p><b>RS</b> Rock &amp; Stone</p> <p><b>SG</b> Sand &amp; Gravel</p>
--	---	--

**Newberry Mountains**  
**Mineral Resource Potential**

0 1 2 3  
MILES

MAP-2  
CDCA-206



E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Existing high quality wilderness values will be maintained on the portion of the WSA that is recommended suitable. Currently, there are 12 mining claims in this portion. There are, however, no existing mining plans of operations.

In the portion of the WSA not recommended suitable, naturalness, opportunities for solitude, and opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation will be negatively impacted from mining related activities. Caltrans is expected to develop the sand and gravel reserves on the northern bajada.

2. Impact on Locatable/Saleable Minerals: Approximately 25% of the WSA has identified mineral potential. Within the suitable portion, with the exception of existing claims, opportunities for exploration and development will be virtually nonexistent after wilderness designation. In the nonsuitable portion, opportunities will continue to be available subject to applicable laws, regulations and the low and moderate intensity, multiple use management prescriptions established in the CDCA Plan. Sand and gravel resources will continue to be available from the areas of high potential in the nonsuitable portion.
3. Impact on Livestock Management: Opportunities for development of new range improvements for the management of livestock will be limited by designation. However, this limitation will not significantly affect the overall management of grazing within the entire Ord Mountain Allotment.
4. Impact on Wildlife Habitat: The Newberry Mountains contains historic sheep range. Wilderness designation of the suitable portion will provide permanent protection from activities that alter the natural environment. However, access to, and development of, any valid, existing mineral rights will, based upon the magnitude of disturbances, reduce the quality of the habitat. Opportunities for maintenance and development of any additional water sources for sheep will be available but constrained by vehicle use and equipment restrictions.

The potential for adverse impacts to raptor eyries and foraging habitat will be virtually nonexistent under wilderness designation.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.



## G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: The many comments received recognized the natural values of the area, with the vast majority supporting the findings.
2. Study Phase: Of the 25 comments received on this WSA, 16 supported wilderness designation for the area. High scenic quality was the value most frequently mentioned as supporting wilderness. Wildflowers, smoke trees, foxes, coyotes, and rabbits were specific flora and fauna suggested for protection. One letter stated that the Boy Scouts often climb to Newberry Peak. Several letters suggested boundary alterations. Another suggested extending the boundaries east to include the roadless region north of the gasline road. And another felt the wilderness boundary was too close to the highway and should be cut back. The area's nearness to Barstow and coastal populations was commonly noted as increasing its wilderness potential.

The letters opposing wilderness designation often mentioned sights and sounds as detracting from the area's wilderness quality. Nearness to Newberry Springs, Highway 40, the county dump site, and mining operations were specifically mentioned. One letter spoke of the railroad's need for motorized vehicle access to maintain itself. Desire for grazing, mining, and recreation (motorized vehicle use, rockhounding, hunting, and camping) was shown. One letter urged continued access to historic sites for everyone's enjoyment but protection of these sites by Rangers.

Many responses were received in response to the Public Input Workbook (3/15/79). One respondent thought the area should become wilderness to protect the wilderness values and archaeological resources. Some comments opposed wilderness designation because the area did not qualify and was best suited for uses other than wilderness. A few comments requested boundary adjustments to allow the continuation of conflicting uses.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: There was a wide range of comments applying to WSA 206. Members of the National Outdoor Coalition (NOC), coalition of mining, rockhounding, and off-highway vehicle (OHV) groups, sent many coupons and letters supporting NOCs position of WSA 206 - to designate this area as unsuitable for wilderness,



or multiple use class "L." Conservation-oriented groups and their many supporters favored wilderness status. The U.S. Marine Corps Base at Twentynine Palms stated that the area lies directly beneath aircraft lanes used for training purposes and would be subject to intense noise which might disturb both wildlife and persons wishing solitude.

4. Proposed Plan: Comments and positions of respondents were similar to those described above. Several OHV enthusiasts were opposed to closure of the area. Other individuals were concerned about the safety of raptor nesting and foraging areas and suggested additional protection by designation of the area as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

No comments were received from local governments.

5. Post Desert Plan Comments: A proposed amendment to the CDCA Plan in 1983, sought to change the WSA's suitability from recommended suitable to recommended unsuitable for wilderness designation. This amendment, however, was rejected. The Amendment's rationale stated, "WSA 206 contains a substantial amount of private land and is clearly unmanageable as wilderness." The amendment was not approved for the following reason. Southern Pacific Land Company, which owns 78% of the inholdings within the suitable portion of the WSA, indicated in writing, a willingness to exchange all of their land within the suitable portion of the WSA.



APPENDIX 1  
ESTIMATED COSTS OF ACQUISITION OF NON-FEDERAL HOLDINGS WITHIN  
AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR DESIGNATION  
NEWBERRY MOUNTAINS WSA (CDCA-206)

PARCEL No.	LEGAL DESCRIPTION				TOTAL ACREAGE	NUMBER OF OWNERS	TYPE OF OWNERSHIP BY ESTATE		PRESENTLY PROPOSED FOR ACQUISITION	PREFERRED METHOD OF ACQUISITION	ESTIMATED COST OF ACQUISITION	
							SURFACE ESTATE	SUBSURFACE ESTATE			LAND COSTS (\$1000)	PROCESSING COSTS (\$1000)
1	8N.	2E.	5	SBM	672	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
2	8N.	2E.	9	SBM	640	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
3	8N.	2E.	13	SBM	640	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
4	8N.	2E.	16	SBM	640	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
5	8N.	2E.	17	SBM	640	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
6	8N.	2E.	21	SBM	640	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
7	8N.	2E.	25	SBM	640	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
8	8N.	2E.	29	SBM	640	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
9	8N.	2E.	33	SBM	640	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
10	8N.	2E.	36	SBM	*(640)	3	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	EXCHANGE	96.0	7.5
11	8N.	3E.	17	SBM	640	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
12	8N.	3E.	29	SBM	320	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	PURCHASE	48.0	2.5

\*Exact acreage per parcel is unknown. Total acres in section is in ( ).

These figures were derived from Bureau Land Records and provide for more detail than GIS estimates and therefore may differ from acreage summaries in Table 1.







# **Rodman Mountains**

*CDCA 207*







## RODMAN MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-207)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA --- 40,454 acres

The Rodman Mountains WSA is located in San Bernardino County in the western portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). It is approximately 30 miles southeast of Barstow, California. The WSA includes 29,919 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), 642 acres owned by the State of California, and 9,893 acres of private lands (see Map 1 and Table 1).

Silver Bell Mine Road forms the eastern boundary of the WSA. The northern boundary follows a natural gas pipeline right-of-way maintenance road and the western boundary generally follows section lines, avoiding private lands. The southern boundary follows access roads to the cherrystemmed Pipkin Cinder Cone. The southeastern boundary is an imaginary line, 400 feet north of three high-voltage power transmission lines in place in 1979, except where the service road extends beyond 400 feet and then the service road is the boundary.

The Rodman Mountains WSA contains northwest-southeast trending faults where vertical displacement has formed a series of ridges and valleys ascending from 2,000 feet on the northern alluvial slopes to almost 5,000 feet in the southwestern portion of the area. An extensive lava flow bisects the WSA from northwest to southeast and forms a sloping mesa. The WSA contains the typical creosote bush vegetative assemblage that exhibits variability based on elevation.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE --- 23,825 acres recommended for wilderness 12,289 BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

Partial wilderness (60% suitable) is the recommendation for the Rodman Mountains WSA. The other 12,289 acres in this WSA recommended nonsuitable are released for uses other than wilderness. In addition to the Federal acreage recommended for wilderness, BLM recommends that 642 acres of State land and 5,553 acres of private land be acquired through exchange or purchase and designated as wilderness. With acquisition of these inholdings, a total of 23,825 acres recommended for wilderness. Appendix 1 lists all inholdings and provides additional information on their acquisition. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.



The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally-preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan and further explained in the California Wilderness Study Overview.

The recommended suitable portion of the Rodman Mountains WSA possesses outstanding wilderness characteristics that embody the naturalness and solitude criteria described in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964. Values that will be protected by designation of the suitable area include: 1) the unusual natural features of the area, 2) significant cultural resources, 3) important desert wildlife habitat, and 4) outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation. Because wilderness values are so significant, the suitability recommendation will preclude any further vehicular use of approximately 11 miles of primitive access routes of travel.

The area presents a variety of landscapes that include lava flows, colorful escarpments, calico-colored mountains, maze-like canyons, and majestic open bajadas; all of which are void of significant human intrusions. Steep canyons and cliff-like walls along the north and west perimeter of this mesa form dry falls along deep drainage channels that become spectacular cascades during infrequent heavy rain storms. More than a half a dozen natural "tanks" are situated within the lava flow. They are found along the main drainages where the wash drops over a layer of basalt or other escarpments and hollows out a basin or tank at the bottom. At least two of the tanks, Hidden Tank and Deep Tank, each hold several thousand gallons of water when full.

Wilderness designation will enhance the protection of the many Native American petroglyphs found on expansive lava flows within the suitable portion of the WSA. The Rodman Mountains contain some of the most superb, best preserved, and densest concentrations of individual rock art panels of any archaeological site in the Mojave Desert. Several thousand rock art elements indicative of the Great Basin petroglyph style are found on the smooth basaltic walls of the lava flow. Approximately 2500 acres in the central portion of the WSA are listed on the National Register of Historic Places as an archaeological district. Four exclosures have been constructed over the past two decades to impede vehicular travel to the most vulnerable sites.

Designation will serve to enhance the desert wildlife values and ecological diversity within the suitable portion of WSA. In addition to the excellent representation of desert flora and fauna, the WSA contains portions of the Newberry/Granite Mountains Raptor Breeding Area. This is one of seven core areas known to contain relatively high densities of prairie falcons and golden eagles, including several eyries. The WSA also contains former bighorn sheep range. The presence of springs within the area and the proximity of quality habitat in the adjacent Newberry Mountains, increases the likelihood for sheep to re-inhabit the Rodman Mountains.

Exceptional opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation occur within the area recommended for wilderness designation. These include backpacking, day hiking, hunting, mountain climbing, photography, and studying of the important wildlife, vegetative and cultural resources of the

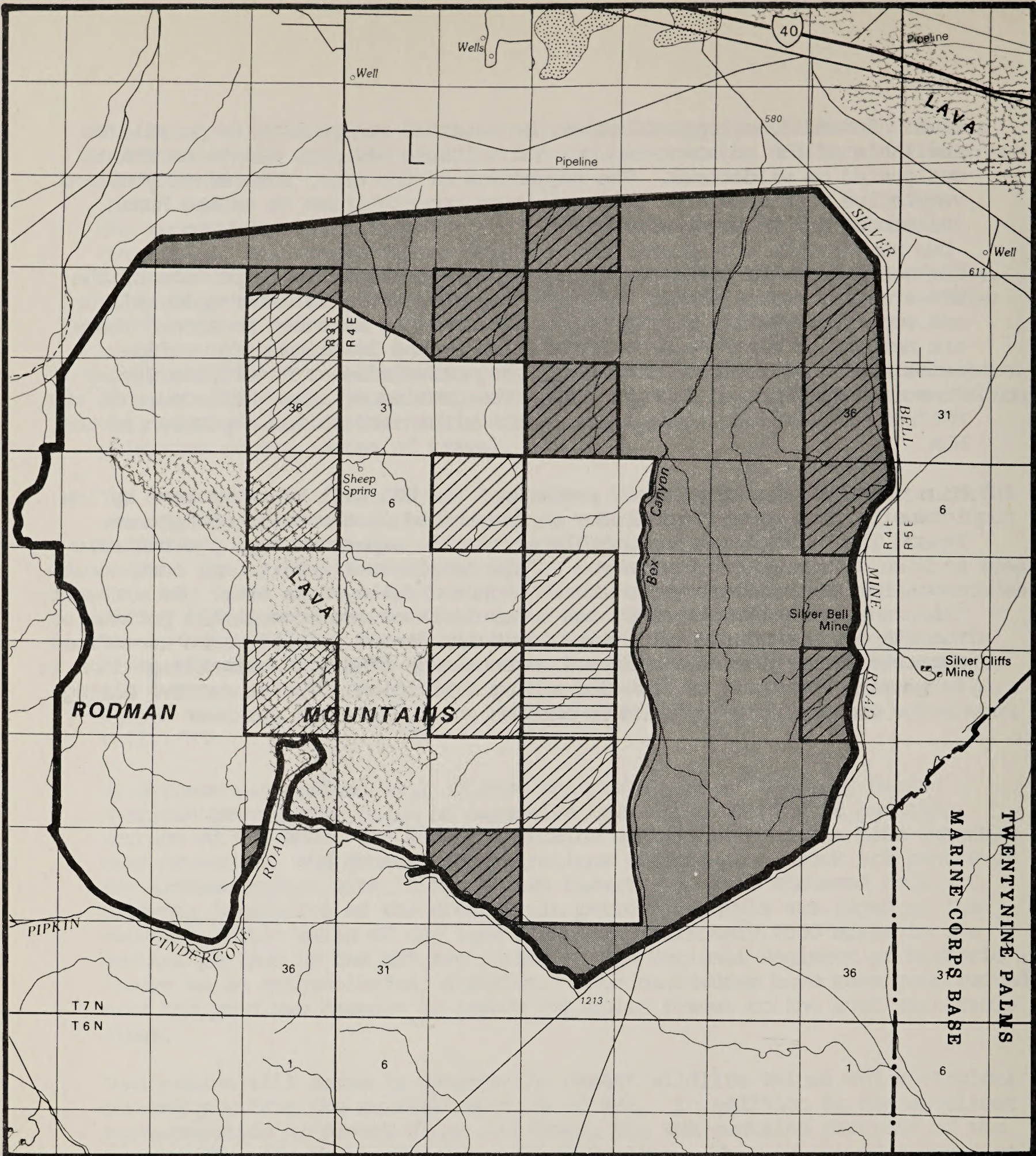


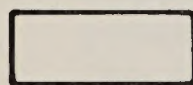


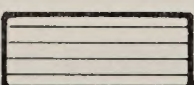

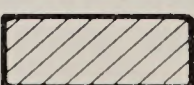
area. In addition, opportunities for extended backpacking trips will be available if the adjacent recommended suitable Newberry Mountains WSA is designated as wilderness. The ruggedness of the area, maze of canyons and vegetative diversity also offer visitors opportunities to escape human influences and to enjoy solitude.

The conflicts with other resource uses within the suitable portion of the WSA are limited. Although there are moderate potentials for gold, silver, and copper, only four mining claims encumber the suitable portion. There are no current mining plans of operation so the likelihood for valid existing rights is considered low. The active mine at the Pipkin Cinder Cone is cherrystemmed from the WSA. The grazing of livestock occurs in the WSA but there are no range improvements within the suitable portion of the WSA.

Management of the nonsuitable portion of the WSA will be controlled by low intensity, management guidelines as prescribed in the California Desert Plan. The bulk of the nonsuitable portion is separated from the suitable portion of the WSA by Box Canyon. This canyon is a traditional north-south route for recreational access to the Johnson Valley Open Area. As a result, this canyon and associated access route isolates the nonsuitable portion of the WSA and reduces opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation. In addition, naturalness of the nonsuitable portion is lessened by evidence of historic mining activities. Twelve current mining claims encumber the nonsuitable portion.





- |   |   |  |              |
|---|---|--|--------------|
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS                  |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS               |  | STATE        |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | PRIVATE      |

**Rodman Mountains  
Proposal  
MAP-1**

0 1 2 3  
MILES

CDCA-207  
JUNE, 1988



TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	29,919
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		642
Private		9,893
Total		<u>40,454</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	17,630
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>17,630</u>
Inholdings <sup>1</sup>		
State		642
Private		5,553
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	12,289
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>12,289</u>

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1 is a detailed description of inholdings and split estate tracts included within the study. For purposes of this report, split estate lands are defined only as those lands with Federal surface and non Federal subsurface (minerals). Lands that have Federal minerals but non Federal surface should be classified in this report by the owner of the surface estate.



### 3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

#### A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The Rodman Mountains WSA is predominantly natural with negligible human imprints. The scenic quality of the WSA is outstanding due in part to the contrast of the lava flow with the deep canyons and the imposing vistas of the rest of the central Mojave Desert. The colors of the "moonscape" setting vary from vivid calicos to reds and deep basaltic black. These colors are juxtaposed against the brown alluvium seen in the distance. The four fences that have been installed to protect the most spectacular Native American rock art, result in small impacts to the area's beauty.

For the most part, the nonsuitable portion of the WSA also lacks imprints of man. However, the area lacks the scenic variety of the suitable portion and contains evidence of historic mining activity.

2. Solitude: The Rodman Mountains WSA contains excellent opportunities for solitude. The area is filled with small canyons and rock shelters where solitude is easy to obtain. The majestic view of the surrounding terrain and the nearby Newberry Mountains provides a feeling of spaciousness and continuity with the Mojave Desert landscape. The WSA's diversity of volcanic landscape gives one the feeling of a "moonscape," isolated and peaceful.

The southern boundary of the suitable portion contains a cherrystemmed road leading to the Pipkin Cinder Cone, which contains an active mine. The sights and sounds of vehicular use and mechanized equipment are not so imposing as to outweigh the benefits of wilderness designation.

The northern portion of the nonsuitable area is a bajada. On this bajada, opportunities for solitude are limited by the lack of vegetative screening and topographic diversity. In addition, surface disturbances from mining developments in the nonsuitable portion are a reminder of man's presence.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The Rodman Mountains WSA, with its combination of relatively large size, diversity, and ruggedness of terrain, contains quality opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation. The numerous canyons, tanks, arroyos, and bajadas provide excellent opportunities for backpacking, camping, and nature viewing. Hunting and wildlife viewing are also activities which occur in this WSA.



The nonsuitable portion of the WSA is separated from the balance of the WSA by the route of travel in Box Canyon. The resultant impacts have a limiting affect on opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation.

4. Special Features: Approximately 2500 acres within the suitable portion of the of the WSA are a designated archaeological district and are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The superb representation of aboriginal Native American rock art within the district is densely concentrated around the more than two dozen naturally occurring tanks contained within the lava flow. The rock art sites are associated with rock cairns, rock alignments, bedrock metates, camp sites and other features indicative of many hundreds of years of aboriginal Native American utilization. The panels display representations of deer, bighorn sheep, lizards, tortoise, snakes, mythical creatures, as well as abstract representations of aboriginal culture, the meaning of which is lost.

The Rodman Mountains are part of the historic range of the desert bighorn sheep, a BLM sensitive species. Although no sightings have been confirmed within the Rodman Mountains WSA, bighorn sheep have been sighted in the nearby Newberry Mountains. There is a good chance the sheep will someday again established themselves in the WSA.

One golden eagle and two prairie falcon eyries, and the associated foraging habitats encompass the entire WSA. The WSA is within the Granite-Newberry Mountains Raptor Breeding Area which is one of seven core areas known to contain relatively high densities of prairie falcons and golden eagles. The spring near the center of the suitable portion is particularly valuable to wildlife.

## B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: The WSA contains 29,919 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush ecosystem. The transitional type Joshua Tree Woodland association is present at the higher elevations. The suitable portion of the Rodman Mountains WSA contains spectacular scenery, varied ecosystems, biological and geological features, and outstanding wilderness values. Due to its unusual geology, its large quantity of aboriginal rock art, and its outstanding views of the surrounding Mojave Desert, the suitable portion of the Rodman Mountains WSA contributes something very different to the existing National Wilderness Preservation System. The WSA is only a three-hour drive from 20 million people in the Los Angles, Bakersfield, and Las Vegas metropolitan areas.

The unique lava flow and deep basaltic tanks will add diversity to the Natural Wilderness Preservation System.



Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,237,989
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,624,185

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of eight major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

Population Centers <u>California</u>	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
San Diego	15	1,043,680	100	3,378,814
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: There are ten BLM suitable WSA's in the CDCA that are within 50 air miles of the Rodman Mountains. The closest designated wilderness area is the San Geronio Wilderness Area located within the San Bernardino National Forest, forty miles south of the Rodman Mountains WSA.



### C. Manageability

The Rodman Mountains WSA is manageable as wilderness. However, due to the location and number of private parcels within the WSA, acquisition is critical for management of the area's wilderness integrity; without them, management of the WSA would be very difficult.

The County's Consolidated General Plan presently designates the private parcels in the WSA "Rural Conservation." Zoning allows the parcels to be subdivided and/or utilized for residential, commercial, industrial, or agricultural uses. In addition, there is no existing access to the inholdings and some of them contain identified mineral resource values.

The BLM has a letter of intent from Southern Pacific Land Company to exchange their inholdings (3,840 acres) for equal value lands elsewhere within the California Desert Conservation Area. The State has proposed an exchange of their one parcel (640 acres) for other land outside the WSA and it is expected that a mutually beneficial exchange will occur. The remainder of the private lands (1,090) are owned by three different individuals and should be high priority for purchase or exchange.

The WSA contains moderate potentials for several mineral resources. Development of any valid claims would cause manageability problems and would result in adverse impacts to wilderness values.

The Ord Mountains Grazing Allotment overlaps approximately 20% of the suitable area. There are no existing or proposed range improvements in this area.

Enforcement of a vehicle closure in the nonsuitable portion would require constant supervision because of existing vehicle use patterns. This portion of the WSA is divided from the suitable area by the heavily used Box Canyon Road. Box Canyon Road has long provided access to the Johnson Valley Open Area, directly to the south and east of the WSA. Several other existing routes of travel provide access into other parts of the WSA. Traditionally, they have been used for mining and recreational access.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The Rodman Mountains WSA (CDCA-207) is located in the BLM Rodman Mountains Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M data in the wilderness section of the Desert Plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) in 1980 indicated that this WSA has moderate potential for economic deposits of silver, gold, tungsten, molybdenum, and uranium. In the eastern part of the WSA (nonsuitable), silver had been produced at the Silver Bell Mine. North and west of the Silver Bell Mine, numerous copper prospects



were known. Gold had been prospected at the Rising Sun Mine in the southeast part of the WSA (nonsuitable). Gold, tungsten, and uranium had been prospected at the Lucky Don Juan Mine three-quarters of a mile west of the WSA. The EIS summary also states that the Miocene-age sediments which are exposed in this area have yielded borates in the Calico Mountains and western Newberry Mountains nearby. The GRA file indicated in 1980, that there were no known mining claims in the WSA as of December 12, 1979.

The 1980 GRA report supports the EIS by indicating the known occurrences of gold, tungsten, and uranium at the Lucky Don Juan Mine, west of the WSA. However, the files and accompanying geologic map in the GRA file indicate that the geologic environment of the Lucky Don Juan Mine does not extend the Rodman WSA. This probably explains why the GRA report and files contain no information to support the "moderate" potential rating for gold and tungsten in the EIS summary. In the western and recommended suitable southwestern part of the WSA, the 1980 GRA report mentioned high airborne gamma-ray values for uranium and thorium in the granitic core of the Rodman Mountains supporting a large area having moderate potential for the occurrence of uranium/thorium. The GRA files also indicated a known copper occurrence at the eastern edge of the WSA. About 3.5 square miles in the eastern (nonsuitable) part of the WSA were classified as having moderate potential for the occurrence of silver, based on rock types similar to those found at the nearby Silver Bell and Silver Cliffs Mines (Tertiary-age volcanic and sedimentary rocks). The 1980 GRA report and file had no data to support a "moderate" potential rating for the occurrence of molybdenum stated in the EIS summary. The 1980 GRA report stated that there was insufficient information to determine the mineral potential of the north Rodman Mountains (north half of the WSA). The GRA file did not indicate any high or moderate potential areas for borates in the WSA. The GRA files indicated that the northern part of the WSA had a "medium" potential for the occurrence of oil and gas and high potential for the occurrence of sodium based on the 1978 U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) prospectively valuable classification for these commodities.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the preliminary suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final recommendation: In 1983, USGS and the U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) conducted a mineral survey of the portion of the WSA recommended suitable for wilderness designation. The results of the mineral survey were published in 1987 in Bulletin 1712-A. Moderate potential for undiscovered gold, silver, and copper resources is ascribed to a zone at the southwest corner of the WSA. A moderate potential for undiscovered gold, silver, and copper resources is also assigned to an area near the center of the WSA. This assessment is based on zones which contain prospects that expose quartz and barite veins and altered rocks, all of which contain copper minerals and anomalous concentrations of silver, and in some places, gold. Although the 1980 GRA files indicate three sites that showed anomalous concentrations of 15 parts per million



(ppm) of molybdenum from heavy mineral concentrates, this information is insufficient to classify the WSA because it is not known whether the 15 ppm concentration represents anomalous values.

According to USGS and BOM, there is no potential for radioactive mineral resources in the Rodman Mountains Wilderness Study Area based on currently available information. Therefore, the 1980 GRA moderate potential rating for uranium and thorium is modified to "undefined" potential based on the conclusions of the USGS and BOM.

Potential for oil and gas is not mentioned in Bulletin 1712-A. Although the area is currently classified by the BLM (1982) as prospectively valuable for oil and gas, a downgrading of the BLM 1980 GRA "moderate" potential for occurrence rating to low potential is supported by the conclusion by the USGS in Petroleum Potential of Wilderness Lands in the United States (Circular 902-A-P, page D5) which indicated that the non-marine sedimentary rocks in the Mojave Desert area had limited potential for oil and gas deposits. In addition, the oil and gas potential in the geologic environment (area not in the Overthrust Belt) is not supported by oil or gas shows. Potential for sodium compounds was not addressed in Bulletin 1712-A. There have been no sodium prospecting permit applications in this area for at least ten years. Although there is the possibility of borate occurrence, sodium borates are comparatively uncommon in the area, and the Miocene-age rocks in the WSA were known to be conglomerate and sandstone, whereas borate occurrences to the north and west of the WSA were known to be in shale. For these reasons, the moderate potential rating for sodium in the 1980 GRA is changed to low potential for occurrence under the BLM classification system.

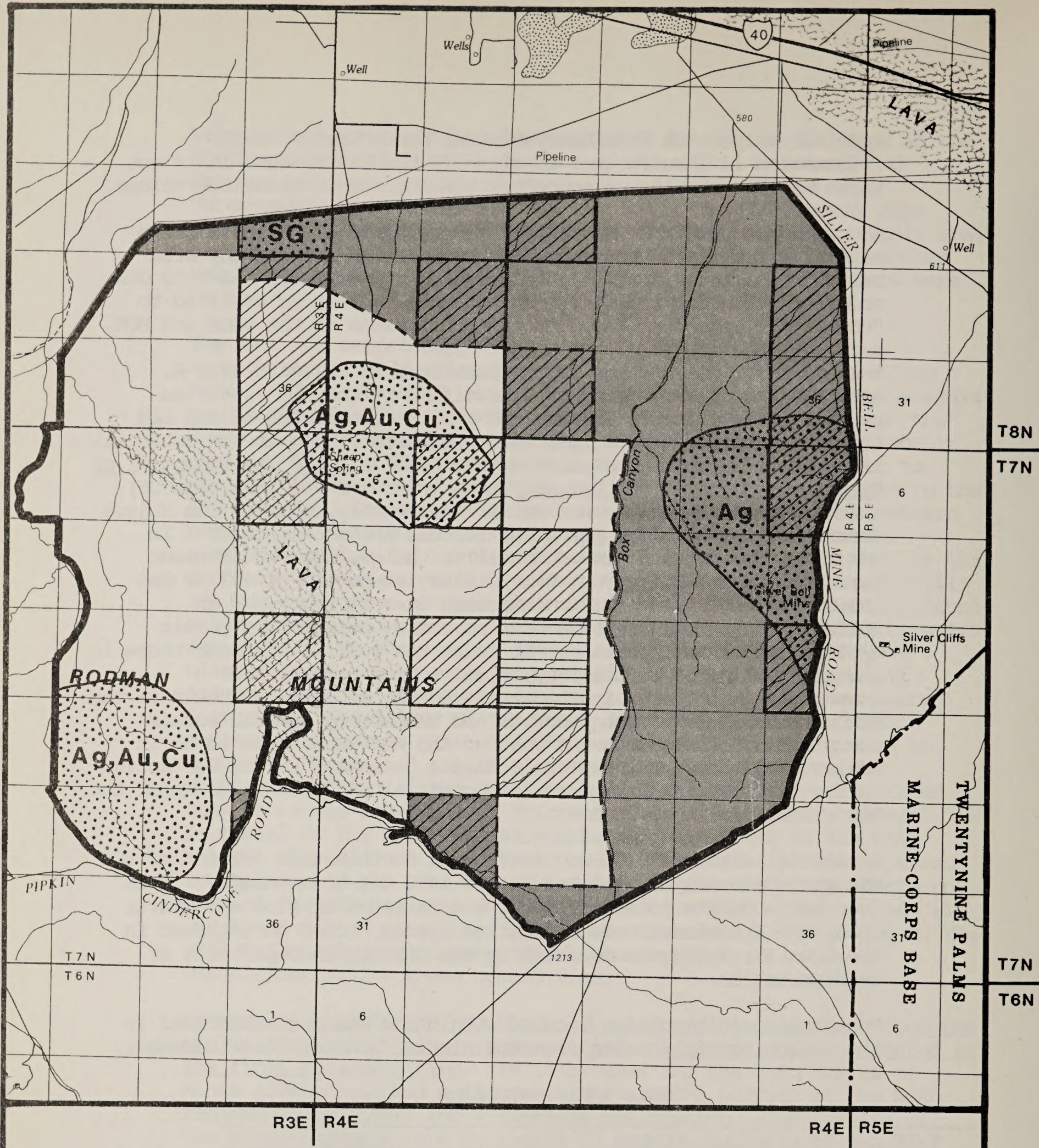
A material site right-of-way in the far northwestern portion of the WSA was apparently overlooked in the 1980 G-E-M assessment. This area has moderate potential for the occurrence of sand and gravel under the BLM mineral classification system, based on interest in the area for aggregate material by the California Department of Transportation.

Unpatented mining claims located within the WSA are summarized in the following table taken from BLM mineral records dated December, 1987.

Table 4 Mining Claims

TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
MINING CLAIM						
Lode	0	8	8	0	160	160
Placer	4	0	4	160	0	160
Mill Site	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	4	8	12	160	160	320





- Recommended for Wilderness
- Recommended for Non Wilderness
- Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness
- Split Estate
- State
- Private

### Explanation

- High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
- Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
- M** Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area
- H** High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area

### Commodity Symbols

- Ag** Silver
- Au** Gold
- Cu** Copper
- SG** Sand & Gravel

## Rodman Mountains Mineral Resource Potential

0 1 2 3  
MILES

MAP-2  
CDCA-207



E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Existing high quality wilderness values will be maintained on the portion of the WSA that is recommended suitable. However, development of any valid mining claims will adversely impact wilderness values in site-specific location within the WSA.

In the portion of the WSA not recommended suitable, naturalness, opportunities for solitude, and opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation will be negatively impacted from mining activity and motorized recreational travel.

2. Impact on Mineral Exploration and Development: Approximately 20% of the WSA has identified mineral potentials. Within the suitable portion, opportunities for exploration and development will be virtually nonexistent after wilderness designation. In the nonsuitable portion, opportunities will continue to be available subject to applicable laws, regulations and the low intensity, multiple use management prescriptions established in the CDCA Plan. Caltrans is expected to develop the sand and gravel reserves on the northern bajada.
3. Impact on Livestock Management: Opportunities for development of new range improvements for the management of livestock will be limited by designation. However, this limitation will not significantly affect the overall management of the entire Ord Mountain Grazing Allotment.
4. Impact on Wildlife Habitat: The Rodman Mountains WSA contains former bighorn sheep range. Wilderness designation of the suitable portion will provide permanent protection from activities that alter the natural environment. However, dramatic increases in backcountry use at or near the limited water sources, has the potential to negatively impact reestablishment of a permanent population of sheep into the Rodman Mountains. Opportunities for development of any water sources for sheep will be available but constrained by vehicle use restrictions.

The likelihood for adverse impacts to raptor eyries and foraging habitat will be virtually nonexistent under wilderness designation.

The potential for significant adverse impacts to wildlife habitat in the nonsuitable portion of the WSA is minimized because of the low intensity management guidelines for the area as prescribed in the CDCA Plan.

5. Impact on Motorized Recreation: Opportunities for motorized recreation travel in the nonsuitable portion of the WSA and through Box Canyon to the Johnson Valley Open Area will continue to be available. However, vehicle access will be eliminated in the portion recommended suitable (65%).



6. Impact on Private Land Development: All private lands will continue to be available for development using County planning standards, until such time that the BLM acquires the private parcels in the suitable portion of the WSA.
7. Impact on Cultural Resources/Rock Art: Wilderness designation will serve to further protect the significant cultural resource values in the National Register District. The likelihood for damage to the sites from motorized vehicle travel will be virtually nonexistent. However, opportunities for scientific research may be hampered due to restrictions on mechanized equipment and vehicle access.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final CDCA Plan and EIS. Because this topic was not explored in the EIS, no further discussion of it will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan which was finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phases were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: Most comments agreed about the natural values of the area, the uniqueness of the terrain, and the presence of solitude.
2. Study Phase: Of the 38 comments received on this WSA, 22 opposed wilderness designation. Most of these letters noted sights and sounds which they felt detracted from the area's wilderness potential; including mines, transmission lines, motorized vehicle use, Highway 40, and the Marine Corps Training Center. Recreational needs discussed were camping, hiking, motorized vehicle use, and rockhounding. The area's ICMP designation was discussed. Mineral potential was mentioned, specifically garnet, barite, lead, gold, silver, iron, and other minerals in the Rodman Mountains, and the site of the Pisgah lava flow. Access concerns were also noted by grazers, the railroad, and those desiring access to petroglyph sites.

The comments favoring wilderness designation often spoke of scenic and unique sites that should be protected, such as the lava flow and petroglyphs. Wildflowers, coyotes, rabbits, kit foxes, smoketrees, and air quality were also mentioned as needed protection. Geologic, educational, and archaeological qualities were noted. The desire



for primitive recreation opportunities such as hiking and backpacking was expressed. The area's nearness to southern California populations heightened the wilderness potential for some respondents. Inclusion of the "Rodman Flow," and combining this area with WSA 213 were boundary alterations suggested.

Some replies were received in response to the Public Input Workbook (of 3/15/79). These comments referred to the area's extensive mineral potential and objected to wilderness classification. The U.S. Navy opposed wilderness designation because the Marine Corps training activities at Twentynine Palms and the use of aircraft and exploding ordnance would be restricted or terminated. Otherwise, noise pollution, ground tremors, and safety problems within a wilderness area would continue.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: There was a wide range of comments applying to WSA 207. Members of the National Outdoor Coalition (NOC), a coalition of mining, rockhounding, and off-highway vehicle groups, sent many coupons and letters supporting NOC's position of recommending this area as unsuitable for wilderness, but to make its use somewhat restrictive.

Conservation oriented groups and their many supporters favored wilderness status. The U.S. Marine Corps Base at Twentynine Palms stated that the area lies directly beneath aircraft lanes used for training purposes and would be subject to intense noise which might disturb both wildlife and persons wishing solitude.

4. Proposed Plan: Comments and positions of respondents were similar to those described above. One respondent expressed fear that closing the area would prevent access to the petroglyphs for most people because of the ruggedness of the terrain.

No comments were received from local governments.

5. 1983 Plan Amendments: An amendment proposal was made to expand the Ord Mountain Grazing Allotment eastward to include part of the Rodman Mountain WSA. Of the 81 responses to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the 1983 Amendments, 32 referred to this particular amendment, three in favor and 29 opposed. One of the proponents was the rancher who proposed the amendment; the other two provided no reason for their approval.

Several reasons were given by those in opposition. Protection of wildlife was a major concern, particularly the desert tortoise (which occurs here in high concentrations), desert bighorn sheep, raptors and their eyries, chukar, cottontail, and mourning doves. The adequacy of forage for both cattle and wildlife was questioned, especially in dry years. Protection of sensitive cultural areas was also a concern.



A modified area for expansion was approved in the Final EIS, so that a large part of the WSA was eliminated from the proposed allotment. This proposal received only one letter of approval, as compared to nine letters in opposition.

Opponents of the expansion included ten conservation oriented organizations, the California Department of Fish and Game, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

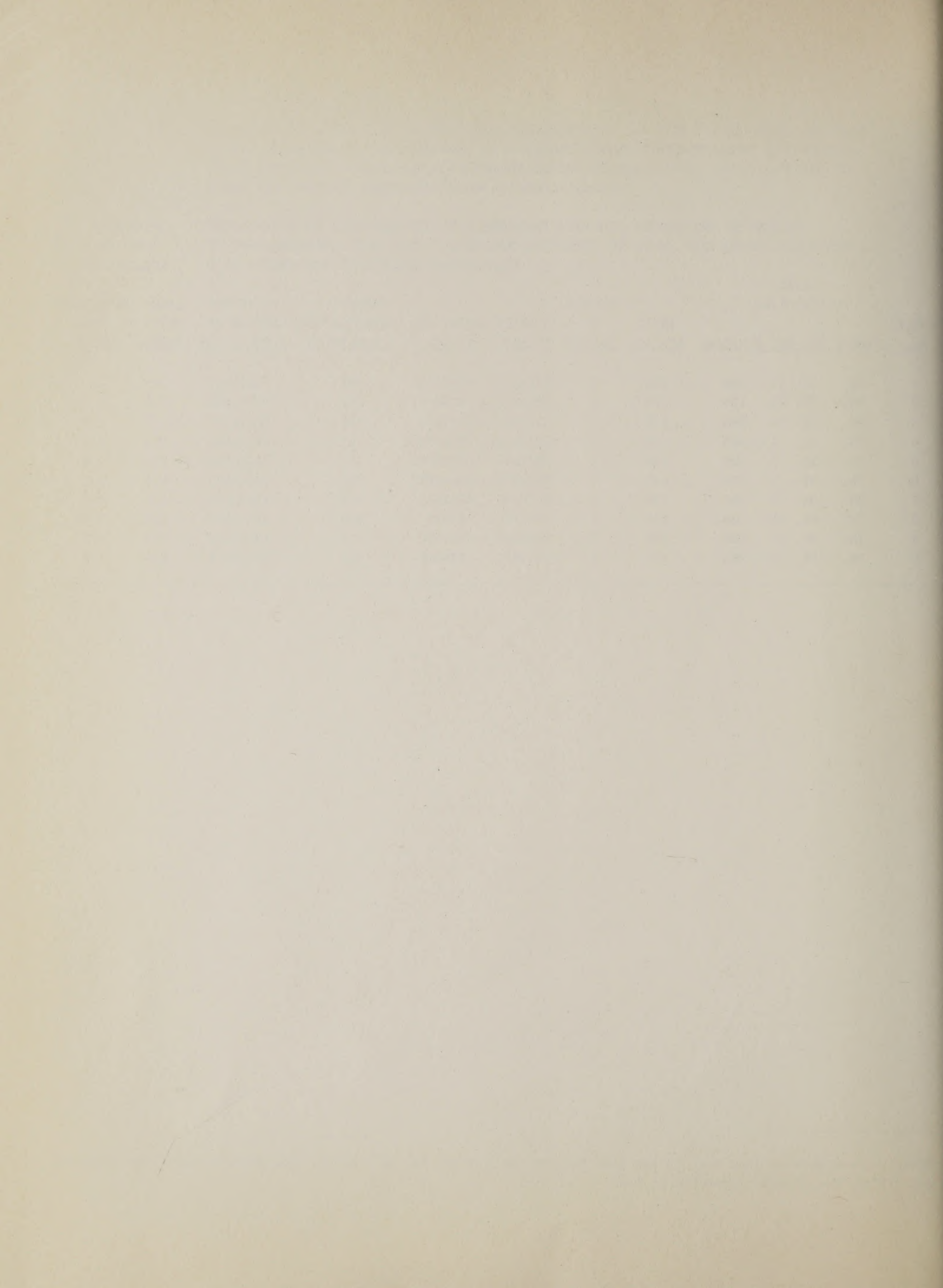


APPENDIX 1  
ESTIMATED COSTS OF ACQUISITION OF NON-FEDERAL HOLDINGS WITHIN  
AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR DESIGNATION  
RODMAN MOUNTAINS WSA (CDCA-207)

PARCEL No.	LEGAL DESCRIPTION				TOTAL ACREAGE	NUMBER OF OWNERS	TYPE OF OWNERSHIP BY ESTATE		PRESENTLY PROPOSED FOR ACQUISITION	PREFERRED METHOD OF ACQUISITION	ESTIMATED COST OF ACQUISITION	
	TWNSHP	RNG	SEC	MERIDIAN			SURFACE ESTATE	SUBSURFACE ESTATE			LAND COSTS (\$1000)	PROCESSING COSTS (\$1000)
1	8N.	3E.	25	SBM	225	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	PURCHASE	67.5	2.5
2	8N.	3E.	25	SBM	225	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	PURCHASE	67.5	2.5
3	8N.	3E.	36	SBM	640	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	PURCHASE	192.0	2.5
4	7N.	3E.	1	SBM	640	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
5	7N.	3E.	1	SBM	640	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
6	7N.	4E.	5	SBM	640	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
7	7N.	4E.	9	SBM	640	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
8	7N.	4E.	16	SBM	640	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
9	7N.	4E.	17	SBM	640	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
10	7N.	4E.	21	SBM	640	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0

These figures were derived from Bureau Land Records and provide for more detail than GIS estimates and therefore may differ from acreage summaries in Table 1.







# **Bighorn Mountains**

*CDCA 217*







## BIGHORN MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-217)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA --- 53,482 acres

The Bighorn Mountains WSA is located in San Bernardino County in the west central portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The community of Landers is one and one-half miles to the east and Palm Springs is approximately 70 miles to the south. The WSA includes 52,593 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and 889 acres of private land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern boundary of the WSA skirts the base of the Bighorn Mountain range from Ruby Mountain to Rattlesnake Spring. At the spring, it turns due north and follows the spring access road for approximately three miles before it turns west. On the west, the WSA is bounded by the Terrace Springs access road and the boundary of the San Bernardino National Forest (USFS). The southern boundary follows no particular political or topographic features. It follows section lines, generally excluding private property. This boundary does occasionally deviate from section lines to exclude known areas of surface disturbance. The eastern boundary follows section lines and then meanders north, avoiding surface disturbances. Portions of the WSA are within a future utility corridor (1990-2020) identified for the State of California in the Western Regional Corridor Study (1980).

The study area occupies low mountains and high plateaus, and is traversed by Rattlesnake Canyon Creek; an ephemeral stream that flows northward to Johnson Valley. Rugged mountainous terrain occurs in the southwestern part of the study area ascending toward the 7,500-foot Granite Peak, just within the National Forest. The rugged Bighorn Mountains in the north-central portion of the WSA are, in fact, the foothills of the San Bernardino Mountains. The southeast section of the WSA contains portions of Flat Top, a plateau which rises abruptly from the surrounding topography. Plant assemblages in the WSA range from a typical Mojave Desert creosote bush scrub to various combinations of Joshua tree and yucca communities, to pinyon-juniper woodlands, and finally, to sparse stands of Jeffrey pine in the more remote, higher elevations.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS. A 1982 amendment to the CDCA Plan formulated a second partial suitability recommendation in which approximately 22% of the WSA was recommended suitable for wilderness.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE --- 11,068 acres recommended for wilderness 41,525 BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness



Partial wilderness is the recommendation for the Bighorn Mountains WSA. The other 41,525 acres in this WSA recommended nonsuitable are released for uses other than wilderness. In addition to the Federal acreage recommended for wilderness, BLM recommends that 365 acres of private land outside the WSA boundaries be acquired through exchange and designated as wilderness. With acquisition of this private parcel, a total of 11,433 acres are recommended for wilderness. Appendix 1 provides additional information on acquisition of this parcel. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The recommended suitable portion of the WSA is located within two separate distinct units. The northern and southern units both possess outstanding wilderness characteristics which exemplify the criteria described in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964. These units exhibit a primitive character which is void of permanent improvements and human intrusions. Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation are found which test human endurance and outdoor skills. Opportunities for solitude exist in the numerous canyons which contain great topographical and vegetative diversity. Because wilderness values are so significant, the suitability recommendation will preclude any further vehicular use of approximately 7.6 miles of primitive routes of travel.

The northern suitable unit is contiguous to the San Bernardino National Forest and offers the wilderness visitor the unique opportunity to experience the ecological transition from the rugged, desert Bighorn Mountains to the pine-forested Granite Peak. The Granite Peak area in the adjacent national forest is primitive in character. It was proposed as wilderness during the USFS wilderness evaluation process, however it was not ultimately designated as wilderness.

The natural environment in the northern unit supports a diversity of wildlife species including a great variety of resident and migratory birds, mule deer, mountain lion, bobcat, and golden eagles. The WSA contains a wide variety of plants and plant assemblages that provide outstanding opportunities to study transitional vegetation types and their responses to changes in elevation and soil moisture, all within the distance of a few miles. This unique mixture of vegetation offers wilderness users outstanding opportunities for photography and nature study.

The southern unit of the WSA that is recommended for wilderness designation also contains quality wilderness values. Although the values are not nearly as spectacular as those in the northern unit, the landscape is primitive in nature and free of human intrusions. There are no known routes of travel within the unit. The area consists primarily of pinyon-juniper woodlands with topography that varies from 5,100 feet in the foothills to 6,148 feet at the top of Black Mountain.

Currently, some hiking and nature study use does occur in the recommended suitable units. Opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation that test the backpacker's endurance and outdoor skills are abundant in the northern and southern units that are recommended suitable.



The variety of vegetation types, topography, and numerous canyons ensure opportunities to escape the masses and enjoy solitude.

The significance of the wilderness values in the recommended suitable units of the WSA exceed all other existing or potential uses. Scenic quality of the units are considered high. The entire WSA contains no State or Federally listed plant or animal species. The BLM sensitive species, Erigeron parishii, is, however, located in the northern suitable unit along Rattlesnake Canyon. Desert bighorn sheep have been extirpated from the WSA in historic times.

Approximately 99% of both suitable units have no identified mineral values at the moderate or high potential level. However, over 1,600 acres of the suitable units are encumbered with mining claims. A few local miners are convinced that there are substantial gold deposits in the area.

There are no private inholdings within the suitable units. However, one parcel of private land not within the WSA boundary is recommended for acquisition and designation as wilderness. The parcel is located at the southeastern edge of the northern unit, on the west side of Rattlesnake Canyon (a portion of T.2N., R.3E., Section 3). It is not completely certain why this particular parcel was not included within the WSA during the inventory; in all likelihood it was a mapping error. This parcel is owned by the Southern Pacific Land Company. Historically, this company has cooperated very closely with BLM in exchanging land to consolidate land ownership patterns.

The configuration of the nonsuitable portion is the result of a 1982 amendment to the CDCA Plan. The northern suitable unit was substantially reduced in size to include only those public lands west of Rattlesnake Canyon. The area east of Rattlesnake Canyon does contain some valuable resources, including transient bighorn sheep range and possibility the BLM sensitive plant Erigeron parishii. However, an on-the-ground review revealed more extensive and additional surface disturbances than previously identified. This reduction in size of the northern suitable unit greatly enhances its manageability as wilderness while allowing traditional motorized vehicle recreation access to other portions of the WSA. There are approximately 31 miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.

The southern unit that is recommended suitable, was originally recommended nonsuitable in the 1980 CDCA Plan. This recommendation was changed in the 1982 Plan amendment because this area possesses exceptional opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, which are particularly important being so close to a major urban area. The unit contains no mining claims or routes of travel and will have a lack of management conflicts or other problems if it were designated wilderness.

The portion of the WSA recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation contains rights-of-way, former Small Tract Act houses and associated outbuildings, and surface disturbances, including a maze of vehicle routes, mining scars, and range improvements. Abandoned mining shacks also mar the



natural environment. By excluding these lands, uses that conflict with wilderness management will be reduced and wilderness management of the remaining recommended suitable units will be enhanced. Among some of the rights-of-way in the nonsuitable portion, are two for vehicle access for the USDA Forest Service to enter portions of the San Bernardino National Forest. The BLM has also issued a Recreation and Public Purposes Lease in this WSA. Private land contained within this portion of the WSA is zoned Desert Living. The Consolidated General Plan of San Bernardino County designates the area Rural Conservation which allows for a multitude of uses not compatible with wilderness.

The WSA currently receives approximately 15,000 visits annually. The majority of the use is associated with off-highway vehicle touring, nature study, camping, and hunting in the recommended nonsuitable area. The extensive existing network of routes of travel within the nonsuitable portion currently provides excellent vehicle dependant recreation opportunities to nearby rapidly expanding populations.

The nonsuitable portion of the WSA is not manageable as wilderness without a significant change in current uses. In addition, the wilderness values that are present are not of high quality because of the extent of existing surface disturbances. Due to the arid environment, natural rehabilitation of such disturbances will take many years. Meanwhile, they will adversely impact opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation.

The nonsuitably recommended area will allow for full exploration and development of the known mineral resources. BLM has received and processed five mining plans of operation in this area of the WSA. Almost 14,300 acres of the nonsuitable area are encumbered with mining claims. The likelihood of valid existing mineral rights is considered very high. San Bernardino County Department of Transportation has operated a sand and gravel extraction site in the southeastern part of the WSA continuously since 1967. The deposit extends a mile into the southeastern portion of the WSA.

The nonsuitable recommendation will benefit livestock management in the WSA. The bulk of the Rattlesnake Grazing Allotment is located within the boundaries of the WSA. There are many range improvements, including fences, cattleguards, spring developments, and pipelines. All of the improvements are located within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA and require regular inspection and maintenance.

Land uses in the nonsuitable portion of the WSA will be controlled under low intensity management guidelines as prescribed in the CDCA Plan. These guidelines will minimize additional impacts to the natural environment and protect the cultural and wildlife resources value that are present in the nonsuitable area.

The all wilderness recommendation for the Bighorn Mountains WSA is environmentally preferable because it would result in the least change from the existing natural environment over the long-term. It is not the recommendation for this WSA, however, for the reasons described above.



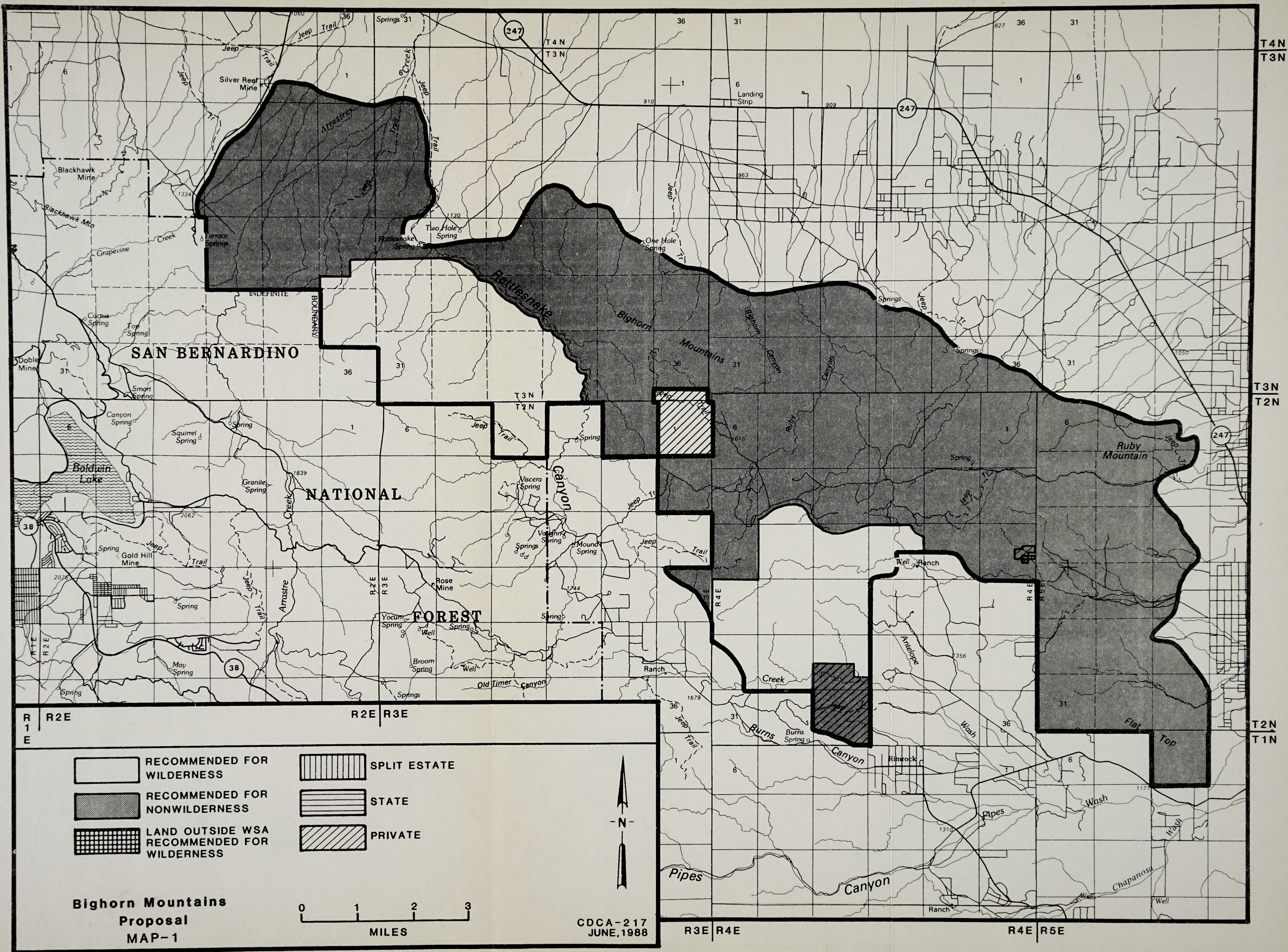








TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	52,593
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		889
Total		<u>53,482</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	11,068
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>11,068</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Private land outside the WSA boundary</u>		
<u>Recommended for wilderness</u>		365
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	41,525
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>41,525</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: Both suitable units are largely undisturbed by man and affected primarily by the forces of nature. Outside the recommended suitable units, there are numerous vehicle ways and trails, prospecting pits, adits, dilapidated shacks, and range improvements. These intrusions are numerous and mar the otherwise natural beauty of the area.



2. Solitude: The variety of topography, including deep canyons and craggy peaks, and the diversity of transitional vegetation, allows visitors to the Bighorn Mountains WSA ample opportunities to screen themselves from other visitors and other human sights and sounds. The extensive evidences of man in the nonsuitable portion does have a limiting affect upon solitude.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: Within the suitable units, opportunities are outstanding for primitive recreation, including backpacking, hiking, nature study photography, and hunting. Unique to the area is the potential to hike from the stark and hostile Mojave Desert through several ecological transitional zones to the forested regions of the Granite Peaks in the San Bernardino National Forest.

Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are lacking within the nonsuitable portion due to the large number of existing routes of travel that compartmentalize the area.

4. Special Features: Portions of the suitable and nonsuitable areas within the WSA contain historic habitat for desert bighorn sheep, a BLM sensitive species. The California Department of Fish and Game is considering reintroducing animals to attempt to establish a resident population.

Five square miles of the nonsuitable portion of the WSA contains desert tortoise habitat with densities of 20 to 50 tortoises per square mile. The tortoise is a BLM sensitive species that is currently under status review by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service as a threatened or endangered species.

In 1909, an intensive chase by the San Bernardino County Sheriff's posse for the Cahuilla Indian "Willie Boy" was conducted in the Bighorn Mountains. It terminated at Rock Corral. "Willie Boy's" memorial and grave site is located in the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA.

Despite limited archaeological surveys in the Bighorn Mountains, it appears that the area has been used over a long period of prehistory. Within the recommended suitable boundaries there are no recorded sites; however, there has never been a systematic survey of the area and several sites have been recorded in the recommended nonsuitable area. Of the sites recorded, all are large with a great density of prehistoric cultural remains. These remains appear to be semi-permanent village sites. Artifacts found include rock art, middens, manos, metates, roasting pits, caves, and flake scatters.



Additionally, within 2 miles of the WSA boundary many more sites exist. These sites include rock art, middens, and a historic arrastre (a milling structure used to crush ore).

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: The suitable units of the Bighorn Mountains WSA contains spectacular scenery, varied ecosystems, biological and geological features, and outstanding wilderness values and would add to the diversity of the National Wilderness Preservation System. The WSA contains 52,593 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush (Larrea) ecosystem. Some Juniper-pinyon woodland (Juniperus-Pinus), California Chaparral Province and mixed conifer vegetative assemblages also occur but is not represented in the table below because of its small amounts.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,215,316
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,601,512

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of eight major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.



Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria-Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
San Diego	15	1,043,680	100	3,378,814
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 miles of five BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness area is San Geronio Wilderness, administered by the San Bernardino National Forest, ten miles south of the WSA.

C. Manageability

The Bighorn Mountains WSA is manageable as wilderness. However, several factors complicate manageability throughout the WSA, but especially in the portion recommended for nonwilderness.

The entire boundary of the southern suitable unit is not easily definable. Maintenance of such a boundary will require special demarkation and enforcement patrols.

Rattlesnake Canyon forms an ideal natural eastern boundary to the northern unit. It is easily definable and enforceable. The proposed acquisition of the private parcel on the west side of Rattlesnake Canyon outside the study area will complete the natural boundary and protect outstanding natural resources. San Bernardino National Forest borders to the south and west. Adjacent values and resources in the Granite Peak area of the San Bernardino National Forest enhances the suitable area and allows greater recreational opportunities for the wilderness enthusiast.

Sixty-eight mining claims encumber 1,660 acres of the recommended suitable units. Development of any valid existing mineral rights has the potential to seriously degrade the high quality wilderness values. However, the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral reports indicate that less than one percent of the recommended suitable units have moderate or high potential mineral values.



The nonsuitable portion of the WSA contains rights-of-way, former Small Tract Act houses and associated outbuildings, and surface disturbances, including a maze of vehicle routes, mining scars, and range improvements. This portion of the WSA also has a long history of off-highway vehicle use. Opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation are limited.

Almost 14,300 acres of the nonsuitable portion of the WSA are encumbered within mining claims and the likelihood of valid existing mineral rights is considered to be high. Maintenance of existing range improvements also has the potential to conflict with management of the area for wilderness.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

#### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The Bighorn Mountains WSA (CDCA-217) is located in the BLM Bighorn Mountains Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M data in the wilderness portion of the Desert Plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) in 1980 indicated that resource data for this WSA had not been fully analyzed, integrated, and interpreted. However the EIS did state that the WSA was known to contain potential for uranium and thorium and possible potential for metals (gold, manganese, tungsten) and geothermal resources (western portion of the WSA). Over 800 mining claims were on record with the BLM as of December 12, 1979.

No 1980 GRA report was prepared for this area, and the GRA files contain no mineral potential classification overlays prepared by the BLM Desert Planning Staff. However, data in the 1980 GRA file shows a sand and gravel deposit within the portion of the WSA recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation at the east edge of the WSA boundary. The file also showed in 1980, that the west end of the WSA had been classified by USGS in 1978 as a potentially valuable geothermal resource area (PGRA). The CDCA Plan shows four occurrences of uranium/thorium mineralization in the WSA. The 1980 GRA file shows three areas with a minor geochemical anomaly for the rare earth element cerium.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the preliminary suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final recommendation: Most of the WSA, except for the southeast part of the Flat Top area, was assessed by USGS and BOM and the results released in Open File Report (OFR) 82-962 in 1982. Because no qualified information (GEM data) was used in the CDCA plan when the suitable recommendation was made, all information provided by USGS and BOM is very important for mineral potential classification of the portion of the WSA recommended suitable for wilderness designation. The USGS and BOM report concluded that most of the WSA



has low potential for the discovery of all types of mineral and energy resources, including precious and base metals, building stone and aggregate, fossil fuels, radioactive mineral resources, and geothermal resources.

The study identified three areas as having low to moderate potential for future small-scale development in the nonsuitable area. The first area, west of the middle part of the WSA, showed significant gold values at the Black Rattler and Big Bucks prospects. Samples at the Black Rattler averaged 2.05 parts per million (ppm) of gold (0.06 oz/ton), and samples from the Big Bucks averaged 2.7 ppm (0.078 oz/ton) of gold. This zone has moderate potential for the occurrence of gold under the BLM classification (See Map 2). The second and third areas identified by USGS and BOM are radioactive-mineral prospects. Samples from the Martin prospects, near the center of the WSA averaged 260 ppm of thorium in the mineral monzonite. The normal crustal abundance for thorium is 9.6 ppm. The other radioactive mineral locality is an unnamed prospect in the southern part of the WSA where a sample contained 6,780 ppm of thorium and 150 ppm uranium. These two areas have moderate potential for the occurrence of thorium under the BLM classification system. The northwest part of the area has been classified as prospectively valuable for geothermal resources by BLM in 1987, and is mostly gently sloping and suitable for plant citing. Under the BLM classification this area has high potential for the occurrence of geothermal resources. The steeper portion has moderate potential for the occurrence of geothermal resources.

BLM has received and processed five mining plans of operation in the nonsuitable portion of the WSA since 1980. In 1981, BLM received a plan of operations for extending the workings on the Black Rattler claims. The claimant (operator) stated that there was once an old Spanish Mine at this location which produced \$250,000 (pre-1840 gold price) in gold. Although OFR 82-962 states that no production is reported from the WSA, the report does say that the Surplus Mine, probably the Black Rattler, was active in the 1890's. The report also states that the main shaft on the Black Rattler Nos. 1 and 2 is said to be 200 feet deep with drifts on three levels. The USGS and BOM report indicated that samples from the Big Bucks Mine, about a mile to the southeast of the WSA yielded as much as 19.1 ppm (0.55 ounce per ton) of gold. In 1987, BLM received a plan of operations for extending workings on the Black Bull claim at the southeast end of the area assessed by USGS and BOM in OFR 82-962 as having low to moderate potential for future small-scale exploration and development of precious-and base-metal mineralization. Under the BLM classification, this zone has moderate potential for the occurrence of gold (See Map 2).

In 1967, the San Bernardino County Department of Transportation obtained a free use permit from BLM for sand and gravel from a drainage in the southeast part of the WSA (identified as a sand and



gravel site in the GRA file). The county has operated continuously there under grandfathered rights. The deposit, which extends a mile into the southeast portion of the WSA, has high potential for occurrence under the BLM classification.

Unpatented mining claims in the WSA are summarized in the following table taken from BLM mineral records dated December, 1987.

Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
MINING CLAIM						
Lode	53	300	353	1,060	6,000	7,060
Placer	15	207	222	600	8,280	8,880
Mill Site	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	68	507	575	1,660	14,280	15,940

E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Existing high quality wilderness values will be maintained on the two units of the WSA that are recommended suitable. Currently there are 68 mining claims in these units. Any development of valid claims will adversely affect wilderness values in the specific locations of the disturbance.

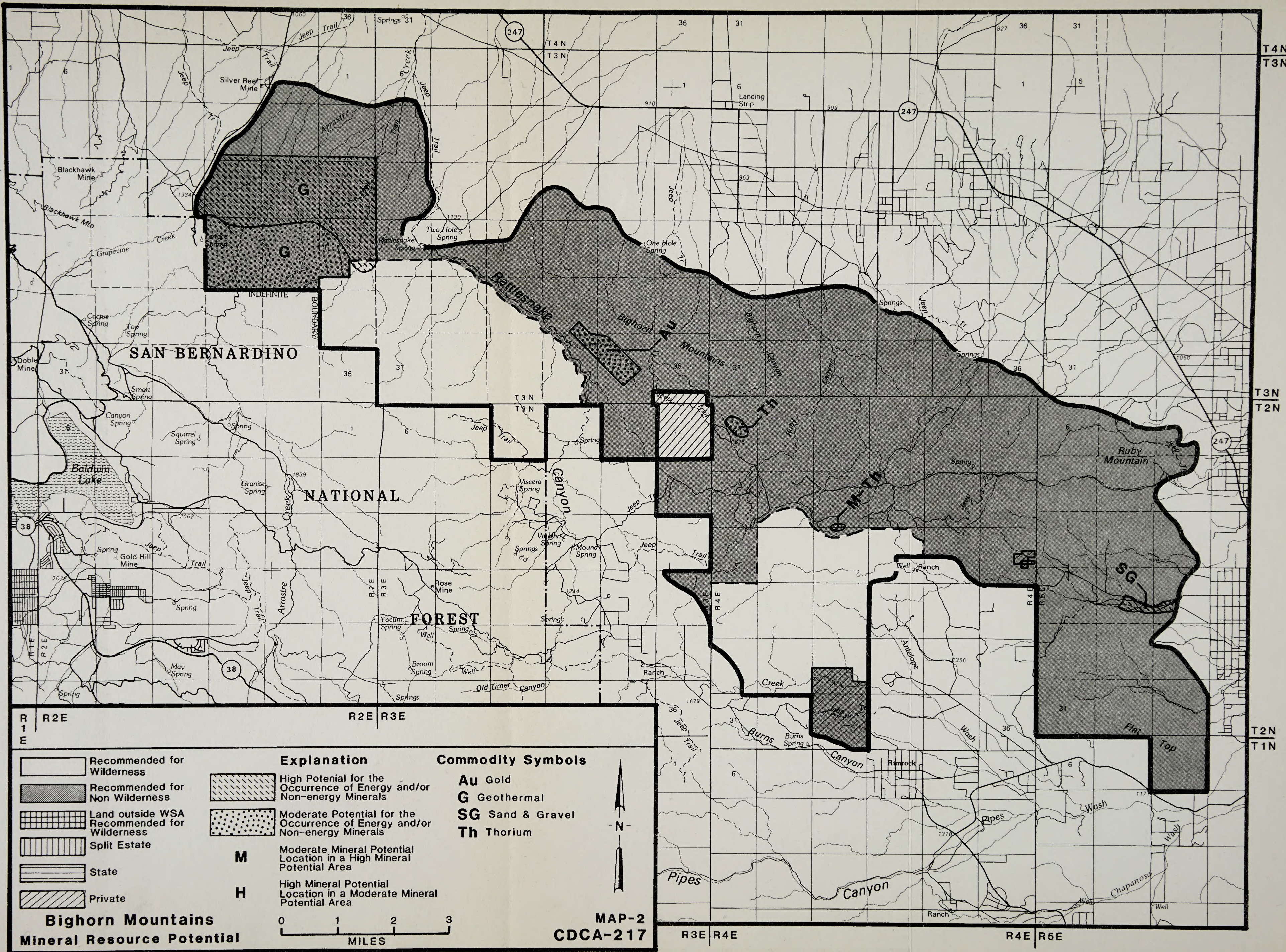
In the portion of the WSA not recommended suitable, naturalness, opportunities for solitude, and opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation will decline primarily from mining related activities. There are identified mineral values and 507 mining claims that encumber over 14,280 acres of the nonsuitable portion. However, impacts will be localized and mitigated to the extent possible because the CDCA Plan stipulated that this area be managed under low intensity, multiple use prescriptions to protect sensitive resources. Projected increases in off-highway vehicle travel will also negatively impact wilderness values.

2. Impact on Mineral Development: A small amount of the entire WSA has identified mineral potentials at the moderate or high levels. However, almost 16,000 acres of the WSA is encumbered with mining claims. Within the suitable portion, opportunities for exploration and development will be virtually nonexistent after wilderness designation. In the nonsuitable portion opportunities will continue to be available subject to applicable laws, regulations and the low intensity, multiple use management prescriptions established in the CDCA Plan.









R 1 E  
R 2 E

R 2 E R 3 E

T 4 N  
T 3 N

T 3 N  
T 2 N

T 2 N  
T 1 N

Recommended for Wilderness
Recommended for Non Wilderness
Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness
Split Estate
State
Private

High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals

M

Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area

H

High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area

Au

Gold

G

Geothermal

SG

Sand & Gravel

Th

Thorium

0123

MILES

MAP-2

CDCA-217







3. Impact on Sensitive Plant and Wildlife Habitat: Identified plant habitat and former bighorn sheep habitat within the suitable units will receive permanent protection from activities that alter the natural environment. However, access to and development of any valid existing mineral rights will, based upon the magnitude of disturbances, reduce the quality of the habitat. Opportunities for development and maintenance of additional water sources for sheep will be available, but constrained by vehicle use restrictions.

Former sheep habitat, desert tortoise habitat, and potential sensitive plant habitat in the unsuitable portion will be susceptible to impact from vehicles and surface disturbances. Overall, however, the impacts will be minor because of the low intensity land use prescription for this area as stated in the CDCA Plan.

4. Impact on Vehicle Dependant Recreation Opportunities: There are no existing routes of travel within the suitable units. Increases in off-highway vehicle dependant recreation are anticipated in the unsuitable area of the WSA due to its proximity to rapidly expanding urban populations.
5. Impact on Cultural Resources: The identified cultural resource values in the unsuitable portion of the WSA will be susceptible to vandalism due to anticipated increases in off-highway vehicle use.
6. Impact on Livestock Management: Overall management of the Rattlesnake Canyon Grazing Allotment will not be adversely impacted by wilderness designation of the suitable units. Opportunities will continue to be available for maintenance, and development of new range improvements, to better manage the grazing in the unsuitable portion.
7. Impact on Future Utility Corridor Development: The WSA is within a planned utility corridor (1990-2020) as identified in the Western Regional Corridor Study (1980) for the State of California. The corridor itself is located east of the southern recommended suitable unit.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.



1. Inventory Phase: A variety of comments was received on WSA 217. Many recognized the natural values noted in the findings. Several pointed out ongoing uses and private lands which have now been excluded from the WSA.
2. Study Phase: Of 61 letters received on this area, 40 opposed wilderness designation. Most were concerned with existing recreation and with factors which detract from wilderness quality. Sights and sounds mentioned were mines, range facilities, aircraft overflights, motorized vehicle use, and wells. There was general desire to continue recreation, such as land sailing, camping, photography, rockhounding, and motorized vehicle use. The area was felt to be excellent for OHV events and for winter recreation. Access for the elderly and handicapped was needed as was access for mineral exploration and development. Minerals potential included lead, silver, gold, and tungsten.

Proponents of wilderness status for this WSA frequently mentioned the contiguity of this area with RARE II lands as a positive factor. Wildlife and vegetation which would gain protection from wilderness status were the legless lizard, the tree frog, the red diamondback rattlesnake, deer, bear, pinyons, junipers, yucca, Joshua trees, and Monardella robisonii. The area's transitional character from desert to mountain was seen by several respondents as a unique ecosystem worth protecting. The short distance from major urban centers was also seen as a reason for needing wilderness in this location. Preservation of air quality and scenic resources was urged. Special features which would benefit from wilderness designation were the following: air quality; scenic quality; opportunities for geologic, educational, and primitive recreation; wildlife, including the legless lizard, the tree frog, red diamondback rattlesnake, deer, and bear; vegetation, including pinyons, junipers, Joshua trees, yucca, and Monardella robisonii; and the unique ecosystem provided by the rapid transition from desert to mountain (San Bernardino/San Gabriel Mountain system.) Features which contribute to the appropriateness of wilderness status for this area were the contiguity to RARE II lands and the nearness to a major urban center. Boundary alterations were suggested. One letter suggested consolidating land holdings in WSAs 217, 217A 218, and 218A. One requested exclusion of a road for ranching needs.

Many replies were received in response to the Public Input Workbook (3/15/79.) Some were opposed to wilderness classification because the area is impacted by existing mines and roads and because of the nation's need for strategic minerals. One comment was neutral if private property could be excluded from the study area. Some comments favored wilderness.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: There were a wide range of comments applying to WSA 217. Members of the National Outdoor Coalition (NOC), a coalition of mining, rockhounding, and OHV groups, sent many coupons and letters supporting NOC's position to designate this area Class "M," unsuitable for wilderness. Conservation-oriented



groups and their many supporters favored wilderness status. The Coachella Water District opposed any action which might interfere with the construction of an aqueduct which would pass near this area as it transports water from the California Water Project to the Coachella Valley. One letter requested deletion of the material site in T. 2N, R. 5E., Section 21.

4. Proposed Plan: Comments and positions of special interest groups were similar to those described above.
5. 1982 Plan Amendments: Two proposals were made to change the suitability recommendations in two different portions of the WSA. Both amendments were accepted.

The first was to change the area east of Rattlesnake Canyon from suitable to unsuitable, Class "L." The rationale was that new information had come to light on existing vehicle routes and mining claims within this part of the WSA, which would make it difficult to manage as wilderness.

Of the 161 respondents to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement on this amendment, 151 were in opposition, nine were in favor, and one was neutral. One organization suggested establishing an ACEC to protect a rare plant Erigeron parishii, cultural resources, and areas valued by Native Americans.

Opponents emphasized the need for a wilderness area with easy access from a major population center, the superiority of the area for primitive recreation, the need for protection of several rare plants, including Erigeron parishii, and the need for protection of bighorn sheep and the endangered mountain lion. They claimed that vehicle trails were unobtrusive and that there was little damage from mining. Among the opponents were 15 organizations and two governmental agencies. The Planning Department of San Bernardino County recommended deferring the amendment until mineral studies were complete and until route designation had been done in the area. The Resources Agency of the State of California mentioned the need for protection of the bighorn and the proximity to a large urban area.

Proponents of the amendment included four organizations, one of which agreed that wilderness areas should be relatively free of long-lasting human disturbances said to exist in this area. Other groups gave no rationale for their positions.

The Final EIS elicited six additional responses, all of which opposed the amendment. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service stated that the change would be detrimental to bighorn sheep and rare plants.

The second amendment proposed for WSA 217 was to change the recommendation on the Bighorn Mountain portion from unsuitable (Class "L") to suitable. The rationale was that this area possesses



exceptional opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, which are particularly important so close to a major urban area. The area contains no mining claims or routes of travel.

Twenty-seven responses were received on the Draft EIS, 19 in favor, seven opposed, and one neutral. Reasons given for approval were excellent recreational opportunities, high scenic values, interesting plant and animal communities, and the lack of management conflicts or other problems as wilderness. The BLM was complimented for proposing wilderness status for this area which was passed over in the initial plan. Proponents included six organizations and one governmental agency. The County of San Bernardino Planning Department offered to work with the BLM in defining the most suitable boundaries and areas for wilderness designation and land exchange.

Opponents included five organizations. One group said the area has already been degraded and is in close proximity to major metropolitan areas. Another said the area was already protected as Class "L."

The Final EIS received only three comments, two in favor and one against the proposal. Reasons given were the same as those listed above.



APPENDIX 1  
ESTIMATED COSTS OF ACQUISITION OF NON-FEDERAL HOLDINGS WITHIN  
AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR DESIGNATION  
BIGHORN MOUNTAINS WSA (CDCA-217)

PARCEL No.	LEGAL DESCRIPTION				TOTAL ACREAGE	NUMBER OF OWNERS	TYPE OF OWNERSHIP BY ESTATE		PRESENTLY PROPOSED FOR ACQUISITION	PREFERRED METHOD OF ACQUISITION	ESTIMATED COST OF ACQUISITION	
	TWNSHP	RNG	SEC	MERIDIAN			SURFACE ESTATE	SUBSURFACE ESTATE			LAND COSTS (\$1000)	PROCESSING COSTS (\$1000)
1	2N.	3E.	3	SBM	365	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0

---

These figures were derived from Bureau Land Records and provide for more detail than GIS estimates and therefore may differ from acreage summaries in Table 1.







# **Morongo**

*CDCA 218*







MORONGO WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-218)

1. THE STUDY AREA ---

6,410 acres

The Morongo WSA is located in San Bernardino County along the west-central edge of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The sprawling rural community of Morongo Valley abuts the southern border of the WSA. The WSA includes 6,410 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern boundary of the WSA follows section lines that exclude private land. Little Morongo Creek forms the eastern boundary. The southern boundary zigs and zags along the edge of private land at the base of the mountains. Big Morongo Canyon road and section lines comprise the western boundary.

The study area is part of the eastern slope of the San Bernardino Mountains. Topography ranges from low, rolling foothills near the community of Morongo Valley to steep, rugged mountains in the western portion of the WSA. Elevations range from 3,200 to 6,300 feet. Several deeply incised canyons, notably Smith Canyon, cut into the east facing mountainous flank of the WSA; many canyons contain springs, seeps, and small perennial creeks. Despite its small size, the WSA contains diverse vegetation. Lower elevations are characterized by gradual sloping drainages lined with creosote bush, cheesebush, and scattered Mohave yuccas and desert willows. Higher elevations have a preponderance of rabbitbrush along the canyon bottoms which is gradually replaced by pinyon-juniper woodland on adjacent hillsides. Springs or seeps are surrounded by dense clumps of desert willow.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced, and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

6,410

acres recommended for  
wilderness

0

BLM acres  
recommended for  
nonwilderness

All wilderness is the recommendation for the Morongo WSA. The BLM recommends that 6,410 acres be included in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). In addition to the Federal acreage recommended for wilderness, BLM recommends that 1,280 acres of private land, not within



the WSA boundary, be acquired through exchange or purchase and designated as wilderness. With acquisition of these parcels a total of 7690 acres are recommended for wilderness. The original narrative of the WSA inventory indicates that these parcels are in a natural condition, unaffected by the signs of man. However, because of an administrative error, they were not included within the WSA boundary. Appendix 1 provides additional information on the acquisition of this private land.

All wilderness is the balanced alternative and the environmentally preferable alternative, as outlined in the CDCA Plan and further explained in the California Wilderness Study Overview.

The entire WSA exemplifies the quality described for criteria in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964. The area contains a primitive landscape that is free of permanent improvements and human intrusions. Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation are available which include backpacking trips, day hiking, the study of rapid transitional changes from desert to mountain ecotonal zones, and photographing unique spring and watershed habitat. Opportunities for solitude are outstanding and supported by the maze of deep, narrow canyons branching from Smith Canyon. Vegetational diversity, and the other diverse topographical features throughout the WSA also enhances the feeling of solitude. No routes of travel have been identified within the WSA.

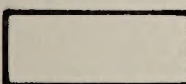
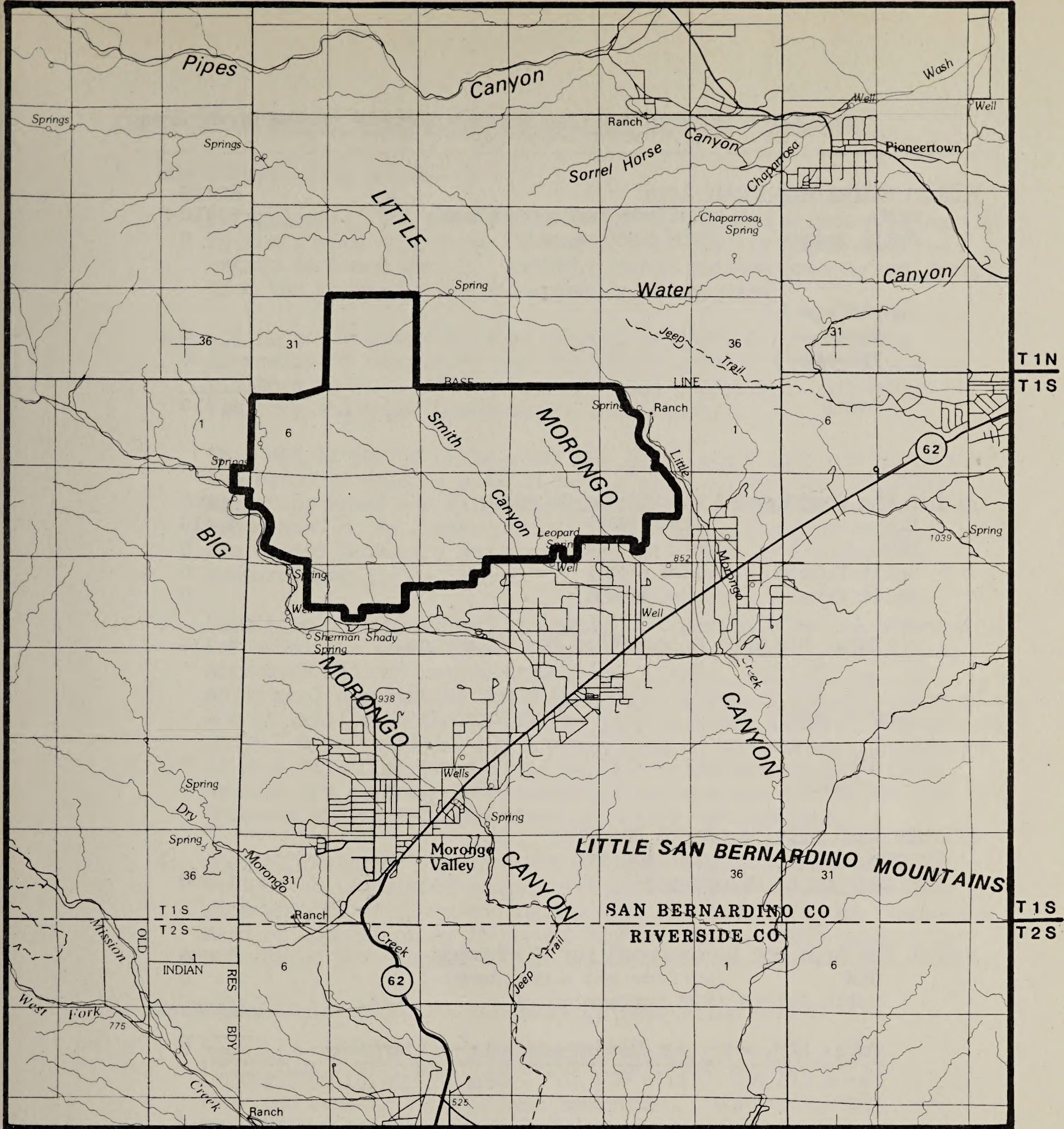
The scenery of the area is superb. Significant values include a unique color contrast of bright green riparian vegetation with ribbons of water cutting through tan, soil-covered hills that contain a scattered pinyon-juniper woodland and Mohave yucca. Steep, rugged mountains add to this unique contrast.

Extensive cultural resource values are thought to exist within the WSA. A small herd of desert bighorn sheep also inhabit the area. All of this provides a spectacular backdrop for the community of Morongo Valley.

There are no identified manageability issues with the exception of boundary demarkation and enforcement. The western one-third of the WSA is within the Whitewater Grazing Allotment. The three grandfathered range improvements within the WSA are maintained on horseback. Only a small portion of the WSA contains mineral values at the moderate or high potential levels. The apparent lack of locatable mineral interest in the area is supported by the fact that the entire WSA is encumbered with only one mining claim. The entire WSA is public land.

Two sections of private land not within the WSA boundary are recommended for acquisition and designation as wilderness. Acquisition of these sections will result in BLM control of a complete watershed in the northern portion of the WSA. The watershed contains significant hydrologic, wildlife, and recreation resources.





RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS



NONE

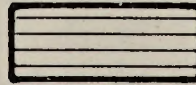
RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS



LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS



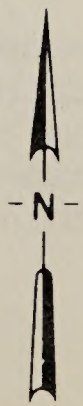
SPLIT ESTATE



STATE



PRIVATE



Morongo  
Proposal  
MAP-1

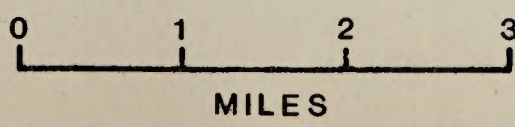




TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	6,410
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
Total		<u>6,410</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	6,410
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>6,410</u>
Inholdings <sup>1</sup>		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Private land outside of WSA Boundary</u>		
<u>Recommended for acquisition and designation as Wilderness</u>		1,280
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	0
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Lands Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1 is a detailed description of inholdings and split estate tracts included within the study. For purposes of this report, split estate lands are defined only as those lands with Federal surface and non Federal subsurface (minerals). Lands that have Federal minerals but non Federal surface should be classified in this report by the owner of the surface estate.



### 3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

#### A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The WSA is undisturbed by man and affected primarily by the forces of nature. However, rural family homes abut the entire southern border. Existing range improvements do not detract from the scenic beauty and splendor of the area.
2. Solitude: The maze of side canyons in Smith Canyon and the diversity of topography and vegetation provide opportunities for visitors to find solitude by screening themselves from other visitors and other human sights and sounds.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: Opportunities are outstanding for primitive recreation. They include backpacking, day hiking, horseback riding, nature study, photography, and hunting. An additional opportunity could be made available by construction of an access trail from the WSA to the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCT). This trail is only 4 miles west of the WSA and development of such an access trail would provide wilderness users a trail network for extended backpacking trips from Morongo to the PCT, San Geronio Wilderness, and other primitive destinations.
4. Special Features: Morongo WSA is distinctive because of its ecological transition zones. The diversity of habitat supports a wide variety of flora and fauna. The WSA is within the range of a herd of approximately 15 desert bighorn sheep. This species is considered BLM "sensitive."

#### B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 6,410 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush ecosystem. The Morongo WSA is one of many WSAs within the CDCA that best represent the spectacular scenery, varied ecosystems, biological and geological features, and outstanding wilderness present in the California Desert. The flora and fauna in the WSA are particularly diverse because the WSA is within a rapid transitional zone between desert and mountain ecotones.



Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,261,499
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,647,695

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of eight major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

Population Centers <u>California</u>	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria-Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
San Diego	15	1,043,680	100	3,378,814
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of six BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness area is San Geronio Wilderness, administered by the San Bernardino National Forest, six miles west of the WSA.



### C. Manageability

The Morongo WSA is easily manageable as wilderness. There are no existing routes of travel within the WSA. Demarcation and enforcement of the southern boundary will, however, require special attention because it abuts subdivided private land in Morongo Valley.

The existing high quality wilderness could be further supplemented by taking the following management action on public and private land outside of the WSA boundaries. Acquisition of T. 1 N., R. 3 E., sec. 36 and T. 1 N., R. 4 E., sec. 31 will protect a watershed that contains significant wilderness values. Currently only the first mile of this important canyon is within the WSA. These parcels are primarily affected by the forces of nature with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable.

The Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail is located approximately four miles west of the WSA. An access trail could be constructed joining the two, maximizing the unique recreational opportunities that both offer. Purchase or exchange of private land and/or acquisition of rights-of-way would have to be completed prior to construction of an access trail. The resultant benefits would complement both the PCT and the recommended suitable WSA.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The Morongo WSA (CDCA-218) is located in the BLM Morongo Valley Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M data in the wilderness section of the Desert Plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) in 1980 indicated that data for the WSA had not been fully analyzed, integrated, and interpreted. However, the EIS did state that there were no known mineral occurrences within this WSA. On the east side of the Piper Canyon Fault, which forms the eastern boundary of the WSA, an adit had been dug a long time ago on a vein containing silver and copper minerals. This type of mineralization could continue into WSA 218. The EIS stated that there was insufficient data to accurately determine the potential, but it is doubtful whether an economic deposit will be found within the WSA. The Morongo Valley GRA file in 1980 indicated no mining claims recorded in the WSA as of December 12, 1979.

The 1980 GRA files also indicated that the WSA had low potential for the occurrence of metallic minerals and oil and gas, and that data was insufficient to classify the WSA (unknown potential) for nonmetallic minerals, common mineral materials (sand and gravel), radioactive minerals, and geothermal resources.



The WSA was not within any areas classified as prospectively valuable by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) in 1978 for sodium, oil and gas, or geothermal resources.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the preliminary suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final recommendation: USGS and the U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) conducted a mineral survey of the WSA during the period 1983 and 1984. The results of the BOM survey were published in 1984 in an open file report MLA 29-84. No mines, prospects, leases, or mining claims were found in the WSA (refer to update in table below). The report concluded that there were no known mineral deposits within the study area boundaries at the time of the survey. The BOM report identified no energy resources in the WSA.

The joint report prepared by USGS and BOM was published in 1987 as USGS Bulletin 1710-B. The report concluded that the north central and eastern portion of the WSA has a moderate potential for the occurrence of silver, lead, tungsten, and tin (refer to accompanying map). A low potential classification for silver, lead, tungsten, uranium, thorium, rare earths, geothermal, marble, sand and gravel, oil and gas, and tin was assigned to the remaining portion of the WSA by USGS and BOM. This classification was based on similar geology to known deposits near the WSA (Pierce Ranch deposit identified in the BLM 1980 EIS) and geochemical anomalies for the above elements in their samples.

Sand and gravel in the area was said to be suitable for many types of construction uses, but similar and larger deposits outside the WSA are closer to markets.

The WSA is approximately six miles northwest from the Morongo gold mining district (Clark, W.B., 1970, Gold districts of California, Cal. Div. Mines and Geol. Bulletin 170, pg. 174). Gold in this district was developed from narrow veins containing free gold, sulfides, and tungsten (scheelite) in Mesozoic granitic and metamorphosed Paleozoic sedimentary rocks. The geology of the WSA is similar to the Morongo gold district. Based on similar geology with known mineral deposits, the area is considered as having a low potential for occurrence of gold and tungsten minerals.

No plans of operations have been filed within the WSA as of December, 1987. No unpatented mining claims have been located in the WSA according to BLM records dated December, 1987.

#### E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Existing high quality wilderness values will be maintained throughout the WSA. Currently there is only one mining claim so there is little likelihood for the development of any valid, existing mineral rights.



2. Impact on Locatable Minerals: Opportunities for exploration and development of minerals will be virtually nonexistent after designation. However, locatable mineral development potential appears low.
3. Impact on Desert Bighorn Sheet Habitat: The WSA contains habitat used by a resident herd of desert bighorn sheep. The habitat will receive permanent protection from activities that alter the natural environment.
4. Impact on Cultural Resources: Although a thorough survey has not been completed, wilderness designation will minimize the likelihood of inadvertent destruction of any resources. A slight negative impact will result to scientific inquiry since designation restricts the use of motorized vehicles and mechanized equipment.
5. Impact on Livestock Management: Existing management of the Whitewater Grazing Allotment will not be adversely impacted. Maintenance of grandfathered range improvements will be subject to reasonable restrictions to assure that wilderness values are not negatively impacted. Opportunities for development of new improvements will be limited.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: Public comment was overwhelmingly in favor of wilderness status for the entire roadless area due to outstanding ecological values, the great potential for primitive recreation, and the proximity to both RARE II and existing wilderness land. Many respondents noted the land ownership problem.







2. Study Phase: Twenty-eight letters were received on this WSA. Twenty-five favored a wilderness designation. Most of the letters addressed areas which were eventually excluded from the WSA because of a land ownership problem. These areas were west of the present WSA 218 to the USDA Forest Service boundary and south to WSA 218A, Whitewater Canyon. This general area was contiguous with USDA Forest Service RARE II and wilderness lands in the San Geronio Mountains. Many respondents believed that this checkerboard BLM land should be added to the total roadless area and requested that land acquisition or exchange be studied. Features which were said to contribute to the area's wilderness potential were its excellent scenic quality, interesting wildlife, including bear, deer, bobcats, raccoons, birds, legless lizards, tree frogs, the red diamond-back rattlesnake, granite spiny lizards, and rock lizards, and outstanding high desert flora which ranges from Joshua tree forests to pinyons and junipers. Natural springs provide a unique watershed habitat that many felt heightened the area's wilderness potential. A teacher of archaeology stated that the land is very rich in Indian artifacts and is a "gold mine for archaeological study." The proximity of the Pacific Crest Trail was considered to improve the area's wilderness potential.

The three letters opposing wilderness designation mentioned the large amount of non-public land in this area. These lands have subsequently been excluded. One respondent said that the values of this area were not sufficient for wilderness and that other recreational uses should be allowed.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: Few comments specific to this WSA were received in response to the Draft Plan Alternatives. However, this WSA was one of a large number opposed by the National Outdoor Coalition (NOC), a coalition of mining, rockhounding, and off-road vehicle groups. This organization distributed its own map for the CDCA, showing alternative land use classifications for the entire desert. They recommended no multiple use designation for WSA 218 and the checkerboard land to the west. Many club members submitted letters or coupons in support of the NOC recommendations. The Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, and the Wilderness Society recommended a wilderness designation for the area of consolidated public lands which is now WSA 218 and a designation of Class L (limited use) for the surrounding checkerboard area. This Class L recommendation was partly in agreement with all of the alternatives and was supported by many letters from other organizations and individuals.
4. Proposed Plan: There were practically no specific comments for this particular WSA in response to the Proposed Plan. Motorized vehicle groups and the conservation organizations maintained the same positions stated for the Draft Plan Alternatives.

No comments were received from local governments.



5. 1982 Plan Amendment: This amendment changed the wilderness recommendation for this WSA from nonsuitable to suitable. Fifty-nine comments were received in response to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Amendment. Fifty-six favored the amendment. Supporting reasons included:

- Wilderness areas close to urban areas can be protected from overuse by requiring permits for entry for recreation purposes.
- This amendment would correct an apparent error in the 1980 CDCA Plan. Available data indicate that the original intent was to recommend the area as suitable.
- This area has no minerals resources and no land ownership conflicts, and it enjoys public support for wilderness designation.
- The area has outstanding wilderness, cultural and wildlife values.
- Excellent recreational opportunities, high scenic values, and interesting plant and animal communities occur in the area.
- Wilderness designation would cause no management problems.
- This area should have been picked up in the initial Plan, and BLM staff should be commended for proposing it now.

The California Resources Agency stated that this amendment would correct an apparent error in the 1980 Plan, the intent of which was to recommend the area as suitable. Also, the area has no mineral resources, no land ownership conflicts, and enjoys public supports for wilderness designation.

The single reason given by an opponent to the amendment was that a Class L designation would be sufficient for this area.

Only five comments were received on the Final EIS on the Plan Amendments, four in favor of the amendment and one opposed. The one opponent mentioned that this is part of the old Morongo Mining District. Wilderness proponents stated that this area is excellent for education and that Class L would not be adequate for protection of the area.



APPENDIX 1  
ESTIMATED COSTS OF ACQUISITION OF NON-FEDERAL HOLDINGS WITHIN  
AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR DESIGNATION  
MORONGO WSA (CDCA-218)

PARCEL No.	LEGAL DESCRIPTION				TOTAL ACREAGE	NUMBER OF OWNERS	TYPE OF OWNERSHIP BY ESTATE		PRESENTLY PROPOSED FOR ACQUISITION	PREFERRED METHOD OF ACQUISITION	ESTIMATED COST OF ACQUISITION	
	TWNSHP	RNG	SEC	MERIDIAN			SURFACE ESTATE	SUBSURFACE ESTATE			LAND COSTS (\$1000)	PROCESSING COSTS (\$1000)
1	1N.	3E.	36	SBM	640	UNKNOWN	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	PURCHASE	96.0	2.5
2	1N.	4E.	31	SBM	640	UNKNOWN	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	PURCHASE	96.0	2.5

---

These figures were derived from Bureau Land Records and provide for more detail than GIS estimates and therefore may differ from acreage summaries in Table 1.







# Whitewater

*CDCA 218A*







## WHITewater WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-218A)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA ---

14,487 acres

The Whitewater WSA spans the boundary of Riverside and San Bernardino Counties in the western portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA), about ten miles northwest of Palm Springs. The WSA includes 13,876 acres of land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and 611 acres of private inholdings consisting of seven parcels (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA is bounded on the north by the T Cross K ranch road and private land until it meets the San Bernardino National Forest to the west. Heading south, the western boundary is formed by the San Bernardino National Forest. To the south, the boundary follows section lines and a dirt road. Then trending northeast, the boundary on the east follows the topography of the mountain-wash interface and private lands until it again meets the T Cross K road.

Within the Whitewater WSA the terrain is extremely rugged and varies between 2300' in Whitewater Canyon near Rainbow Rancho to 5500' in the peaks overlooking the northern end of Stubbe Canyon. Because of this elevation gradient, the area reflects a unique transition between desert, coastal and mountain environments and it supports vegetation representative of each. At the lower elevations, vegetation associated with creosote bush scrub is found, while on the higher slopes, it gives way to chaparral-type vegetation. Farther up, at the higher elevations, California juniper and Pinyon pine complete the sequence.

Approximately 60% of the Whitewater WSA is overlapped by the Whitewater Canyon Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). This ACEC, extending into the northern and eastern portions of the WSA, was designated in the California Desert Plan in 1980 in recognition of its important wildlife and Native American resource values which require special management attention.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed by the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced, and no action; a summary of the WSA's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

As a result of public comments received in the study phase of the CDCA Plan, a 130-acre tract, which was not included in the original recommendation, has been included in the study process under authority granted in Section 202 of FLPMA and is recommended for wilderness designation. This tract is shown on Map 1.



2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

11,169	acres recommended for wilderness
2,707	BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

Partial wilderness (80% suitable) is the recommendation for this WSA. The 11,169 acres recommended for wilderness designation and the 2,707 acres recommended as nonsuitable are shown on the Whitewater WSA Map (Map 1). An additional 130-acre tract outside the Wilderness Study Area is also recommended as suitable for wilderness designation. The 2,707 acres in the WSA recommended non-suitable are released for uses other than wilderness. This recommendation for wilderness will further apply to any additional inholding acreage acquired through purchase or exchange with willing owners within the recommended area. All inholdings are listed in Appendix I. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally-preferable alternative as outlined in the California Desert Conservation Area Plan and further explained in the California Wilderness Study Overview.

The portion of this WSA, endorsed for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS), is recommended for the following reasons: (1) the area possesses wilderness values which far exceed the criteria specified in Section 2 (c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964; (2) because it is situated in a transition zone between three distinct environments, it contains outstanding ecological diversity; (3) the area contains numerous special features and (4) conflicts between wilderness values and other resource values are low. Because of these important factors, preservation of this area as wilderness outweighs any alternative uses of the area.

The wilderness values of the suitable area are exemplary. Throughout this area, the forces of nature have been the primary influence. Here, solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation are outstanding. The area is capable of providing a degree of challenge to anyone interested in primitive recreation, regardless of experience or physical condition. Because wilderness values are so significant, the suitability recommendation will preclude any further vehicular use of approximately two miles of primitive access routes of travel.

The suitable area is remarkable for its diverse topography, wildlife and vegetation. Ecologically, this area lies across a transition zone where the Mojave and Sonoran Deserts overlap with coastal habitats. Year-round water supplied by the Whitewater River and Mission Creek provide an additional riparian ecosystem, uncommon in this desert region. These components combine to create a wide array of habitat types supporting an assortment of plant and animal species.

A variety of special features are present within the suitable area. A brief list of these features includes unusual wildlife, spectacular scenic vistas, and areas of important Native American significance. These features were



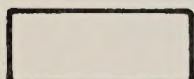
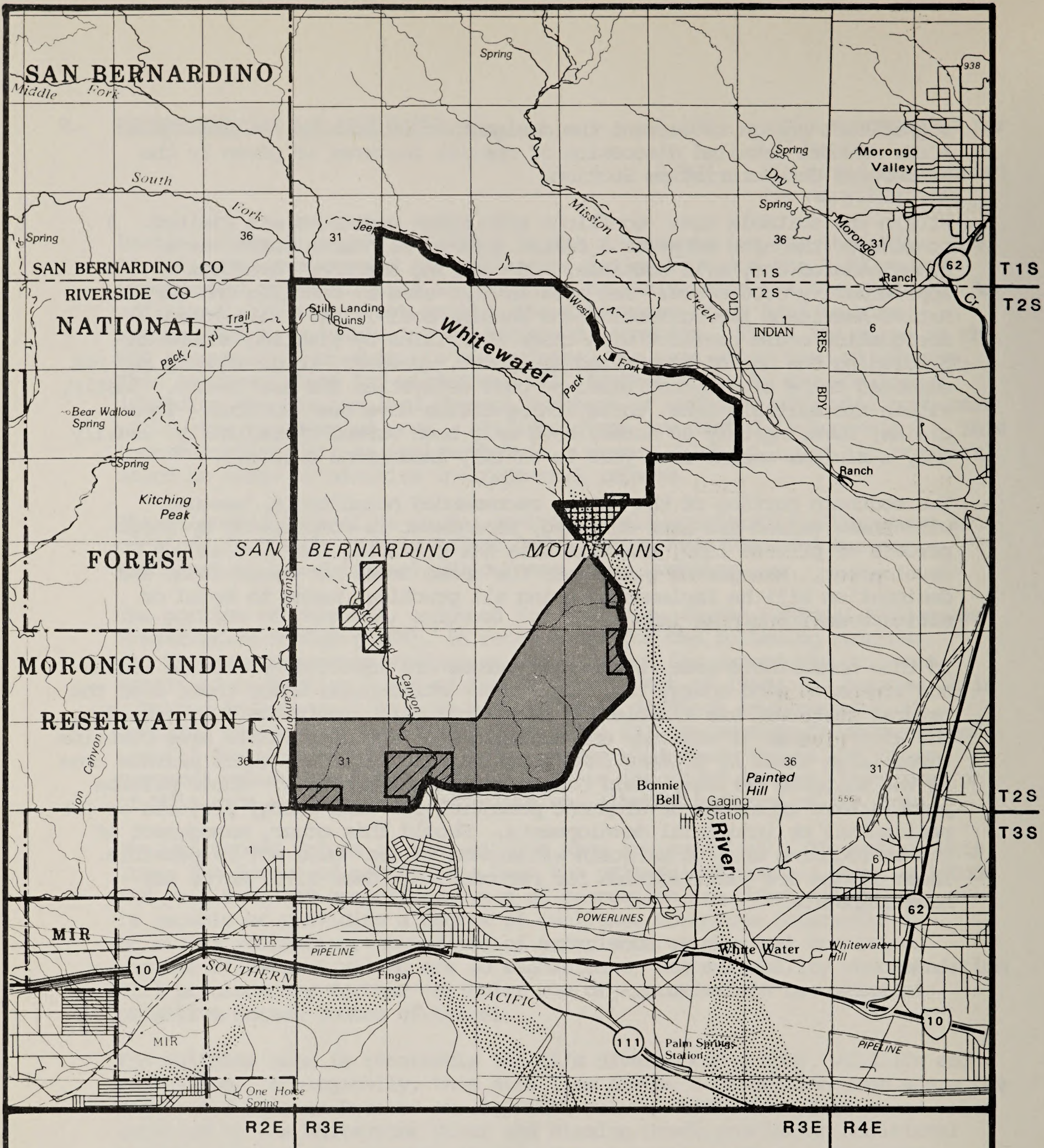
significant enough to warrant the designation of much of the area as an ACEC. A more detailed discussion of special features is given in the Wilderness Characteristics Section.

Within the suitable area, conflicts with other resources are limited. A portion of the area supports a cattle grazing allotment which, as a grandfathered use, will continue. The grazing allotment overlaps approximately 5000 acres. The area is also used by Cahuilla and Serrano Native Americans for collection and hunting activities. Wilderness designation could conflict with these activities by limiting access and precluding the use of mechanized equipment. However, these impacts are not expected to be significant based on past activities and use levels. Lastly, within the suitable area, three mining claims have been located. These claims, covering only 80 acres, have only been worked sporadically, usually only a minimal amount each year to satisfy assessment criteria.

The southern portion of the WSA is recommended nonsuitable, because wilderness values are less striking, management is complicated by large parcels of private land, and this area has potential for wind energy development. Management guidelines for those areas not recommended for designation will be implemented using all practical means to avoid or mitigate environmental impact.

In this nonsuitable area, wilderness values are impacted by outside sights and sounds of wind energy turbines. These structures, which tower over the natural features, are visible for close to a mile within the WSA, degrading the area's sense of solitude and naturalness. The nonsuitable area contains three large areas of private inholdings which, unlike the small private area in the suitable portion, would create management problems. These private parcels have excellent development potential for wind energy projects or for residential or industrial developments. Should this occur, management of the surrounding area to maintain wilderness values would not be possible. These issues are justification for recommending these 2,707 acres for nondesignation.





RECOMMENDED FOR  
WILDERNESS



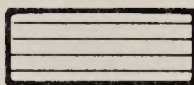
RECOMMENDED FOR  
NONWILDERNESS



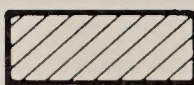
LAND OUTSIDE WSA  
RECOMMENDED FOR  
WILDERNESS



SPLIT ESTATE

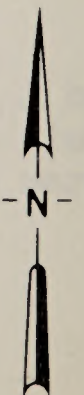
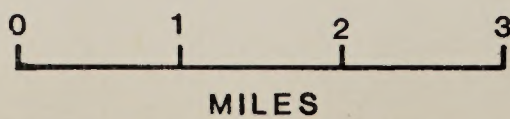


STATE



PRIVATE

**Whitewater  
Proposal**  
MAP-1



CDCA-218A  
JUNE, 1988



TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	13,876
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		611
Total		<u>14,487</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	11,039
BLM	(outside WSA)	130
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>11,169</u>
Inholdings <sup>1</sup>		
State		0
Private		213
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	2,707
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>2,707</u>

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1 is a detailed description of inholdings and split estate tracts included within the study. For purposes of this report, split estate lands are defined only as those lands with Federal surface and non Federal subsurface (minerals). Lands that have Federal minerals but non Federal surface should be classified in this report by the owner of the surface estate.



3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The forces of nature that created this WSA continue to be the area's primary influence. Overall, the area exhibits a primitive character. For the most part, it is insulated from the effects of nearby man-made features such as homesteads, utilities and highways by both vegetation and terrain. A few private inholdings are found within the suitably recommended area boundaries, however, this area generally reflects a primitive environment where man's imprint is substantially unnoticeable. In the WSA's nonsuitable portion, there is some evidence of old abandoned mines, indistinct routes and traces of ranching operations, but these remnants of past activity are insignificant. The WSA's proximity to other popular recreation areas has diverted substantial recreational use away from the WSA. This fact, in addition to the rugged terrain and lack of easy access into the area's interior accounts for the naturalness of the area.
2. Solitude: The Whitewater WSA provides visitors with abundant opportunities for solitude. The suitable area is completely isolated from external disruptions by the buffers created by the rugged terrain and the extensive wilderness area in the San Bernardino National Forest. Internally, the study area is diverse. Pockets of insulation, formed by the terrain, provide users with a sense of remoteness seldom found in this busy area. Steep-walled canyons, large rock outcrops, rolling terrain, and vegetation, that is, in many cases, tall and dense, ensure a sense of seclusion and solitude. This feeling is enhanced by the spectacular views of vast valleys and majestic mountains that can be seen from high points within the WSA.

In the nonsuitable portion, however, the intruding sight of wind turbines detracts from the feeling of aloneness. The wind turbines, many standing taller than 100', are visible for long distances. The distraction they cause is compounded by the ceaseless motion of their whirling rotors. The nonsuitable area immediately adjacent to this development is also affected by the turbine's sounds, a low-frequency whir.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The recently completed section of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, constructed to blend in with the natural terrain, provides hikers with a rugged route through some of the most unspoiled landscapes in southern



California. This trail provides access for hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, photography, painting, nature study and many other forms of primitive recreation. Because of its diverse landforms and ecosystems, the area is capable of providing a degree of challenge to anyone interested in primitive recreation regardless of experience or physical condition. Local schools, colleges and universities use the area regularly for teaching and research. Hunting pressure for quail, chukar, deer and bear is light. The Whitewater WSA contains only natural barriers to impede visitors' movement. There are no man-made obstructions of any type that would restrict activities. Recreation within the area is unconfined. Unrestricted views across the Coachella Valley and of the San Bernardino and San Jacinto ranges augment the sense of freedom and spaciousness. Within the nonsuitable area, primitive and unconfined recreation is limited by the proximity of wind energy developments.

4. Special Features: The Whitewater WSA is also designated as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern because of its important wildlife, vegetation and Native American resource values.

Historically, the area has had special appeal to scientists and research groups because it is located in a transitional zone where the Mojave and Sonoran deserts overlap with coastal habitats. This transitional ecotone can be seen in the diversity of both animal and plant life. Riparian vegetation consisting of cottonwood and willow are found in Cottonwood Canyon, Whitewater Canyon and along Mission Creek.

The area supports a wide variety of mammals and reptiles. A large herd of bighorn sheep, a BLM sensitive species, use large portions of the study area as winter range. Black bear are occasionally sighted on the slopes, and scattered sites throughout the WSA support significant bird populations. Whitewater Canyon is located in a major bird migration corridor. The numerous riparian areas in the canyon are heavily utilized during the spring and fall, particularly by migrating songbirds. The Canyon also supports a strong breeding population of raptors, including prairie falcon, golden eagle and red-tailed hawk.

The study area provides a unique opportunity to study aspects of biology such as isolation, speciation, and intergradation. Several species of reptiles found here, such as the banded gecko, glossy snake and gopher snake exhibit morphological characteristics of both desert and coastal variations, an example of intergradation. Whitewater canyon also marks the range boundary for several species. The Whitewater River appears to be the factor isolating two subspecies of collard lizards (Crotaphytus insularis vestigium and C. i. bicinctores) which some investigators feel warrant separate species status.



A portion of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail passes through the western portion of the WSA. This trail opens up the interior of the Whitewater area and provides challenging recreational experiences to day hikers or backpackers.

The Whitewater area is of general significance to Cahuilla peoples, containing agave collection areas, trails, occupation sites and ritual sites. The area is distinctive in its concentration of resources important to Native Americans. A historic Indian village is located in the northern portion of the area. Cahuilla people lived in the area until the 1930's.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 13,876 acres of the California Chaparral/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland ecosystem. Whitewater Canyon and the surrounding area have special significance because they are situated in an ecotone where the Mojave and the Sonoran deserts overlap with coastal habitats. The blending of different climatic influences has created a diverse, and in some cases, an unusual flora and fauna. Variability in elevation, terrain and water availability also contribute to diverse plant and animal life found in the canyon. The area may serve as a prime location for the study of such aspects of biology as isolation, speciation and intergradation. This diversity is unique to the area and not replicated elsewhere in the California Desert.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
California Chaparral/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	1	42,971	1	23,821
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
California Chaparral/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	1	42,971	1	23,821

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of nine major population centers. Table 5 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.



Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

<u>Population Centers</u>	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria-Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
San Diego	15	1,043,680	100	3,378,814
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The Whitewater WSA is adjacent to the San Geronio Wilderness Area, designated wilderness administered by the San Bernardino National Forest. Within a 50-mile radius there are three other designated wilderness areas: San Jacinto Wilderness and Santa Rosa Wilderness, within the San Bernardino National Forest; and Joshua Tree Wilderness within Joshua Tree National Monument. Also within 50 miles lies the Mount San Jacinto State Wilderness Area and four additional BLM recommended suitable WSAs.

#### C. Manageability

The Whitewater WSA is manageable as wilderness. However, the suitable area would be more easily managed than the area recommended nonsuitable.

Within the suitable area, there are five contiguous privately-owned parcels. The private property known as Cox Ranch is relatively small, only 200 acres. Because of its location, in the steep upper reaches of Cottonwood Canyon, there is no vehicle access. The area is accessible only by foot. No significant improvements could be developed there that would cause management problems for the adjacent wilderness. However, acquisition of these parcels would enhance manageability and is therefore, recommended. There are three mining claims located in the suitable portion of the WSA. If the property and mineral rights cannot be acquired, impacts resulting from access requirements and resultant mining activities would create manageability problems for the WSA. However, all activities will be mitigated to ensure that wilderness resources are not reduced significantly.



The portion of the WSA not being recommended as suitable could also be manageable as wilderness, however, with considerable more difficulty. This portion of the WSA includes more private lands which are prime for development, either for wind energy or for industrial or residential purposes. To the east, the boundary runs through about one and one half miles of private land in Whitewater Canyon which, if developed, would have significant adverse impacts on the surrounding wilderness values. In the southeast, this boundary coincides with the boundary of a large wind energy development, which is defined by a well-maintained, heavily traveled dirt road. Vehicle use along this road, which could potentially effect wilderness values, would be difficult to contain without extensive patrols. Lastly, expanding industrial and residential development in the south is approaching the boundary of the WSA. Wilderness values would be difficult to maintain because of the development pressure along this boundary.

Based on current technology and landform, wind energy development potential is high in the nonsuitable area, but current management guidelines preclude this type of development. Because of this stringent direction, development would require a CDCA Plan amendment to proceed. Studies conducted by Southern California Edison as well as several private consultants have concluded that this area has winds which are sufficiently strong and steady to allow for economically feasible development.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

#### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of preliminary suitability recommendation: The Whitewater WSA is located in the BIM Morongo Geology-Energy-Mineral (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). The G-E-M section of the wilderness portion of the CDCA Plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) stated that mineral resource data for the WSA had not been fully analyzed, integrated, and interpreted. However, the EIS did state that the Potential Geothermal Resource Area within the WSA was also considered as having a possible potential for uranium, metals, and geothermal resources.

The Morongo GRA file data and report showed areas in the northwestern and southern portions of the WSA as having moderate potential for the occurrence of vein-hosted hydrothermal gold deposits. Data in the 1980 GRA file were insufficient to classify the eastern portion of the WSA for metallic minerals. The remaining portion of the WSA was classified as low potential for metallic minerals. The WSA was not classified for nonmetallic minerals based on insufficient data. GRA file data shows that the WSA was classified by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) as a Potential Geothermal Resource Area (PGRA) in 1978.



2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the preliminary suitability recommendations which should be considered in the final recommendation: The USGS and U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) conducted a mineral survey of the WSA during 1981. New data is presented in the BOM report MIA 27-86 (1986) and stated that significant amounts of gold and silver were found in samples from the Bonanza prospect, located in the south-central portion of the WSA. Sporadically distributed mineralization was developed by a 124-foot adit along a hydrothermally altered shear zone in gneissic rock at this prospect.

In 1985, the USGS and BOM released their joint report MF-1478, which classified the area around the bonanza prospect as having a low to moderate potential for the discovery of low grade silver and gold deposits (See Map 2). The area encompasses 60 acres and stretches along a mineralized fault zone.

The WSA was classified by the BLM in 1982 as being prospectively valuable for geothermal resources. This classification supports the EIS PGRA classification. No known volcanic or hot spring activity is known from the WSA. However, the northern portion lies along the Mission Creek fault zone, a possible conduit for hot water.

Data from the USGS and BOM report indicated limestone, stone, and sand and gravel production one and one-half to seven miles from the south boundary of the WSA. Geologic conditions at these quarries and pits also exist in the WSA.

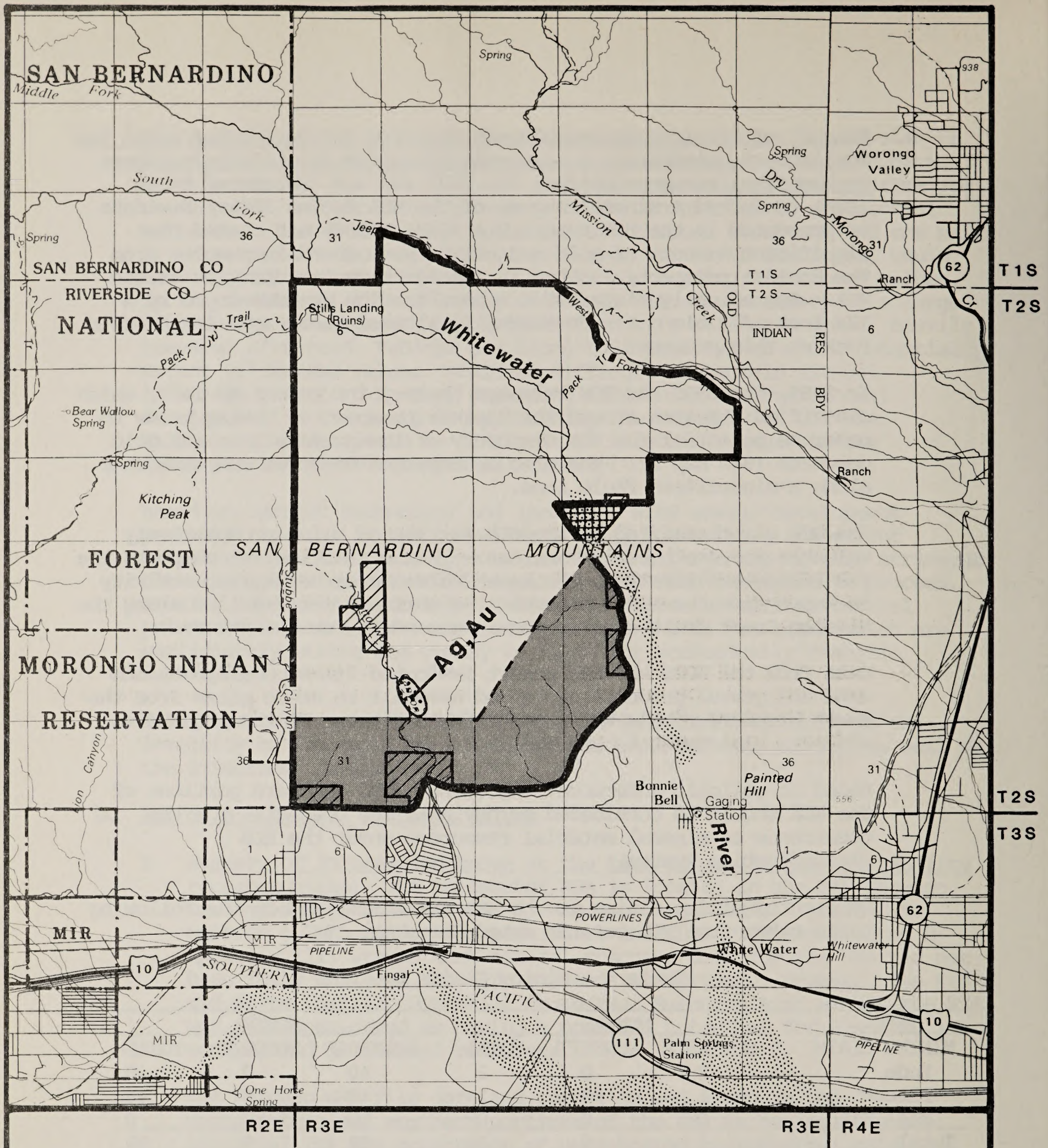
Based on geologic inference, the eastern and southern portions of the WSA should be considered as having a low potential for the occurrence of mineral material resources under the BLM classification system.

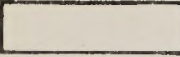

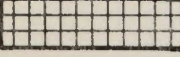
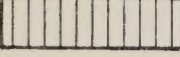
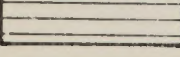
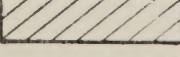
Unpatented mining claims in the WSA are summarized in the following table taken from BLM records dated December, 1987.

Table 4 - Mining Claims

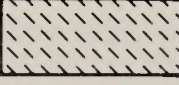
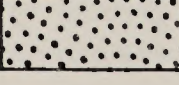
TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
MINING CLAIM						
Lode	2	0	2	40	0	40
Placer	1	0	1	40	0	40
Mill Site	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	3	0	3	80	0	80





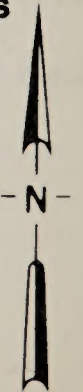
-  Recommended for Wilderness
-  Recommended for Non Wilderness
-  Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness
-  Split Estate
-  State
-  Private

### Explanation

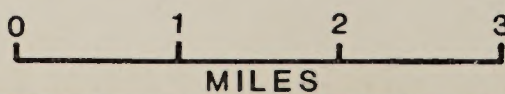
-  High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
-  Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
- M** Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area
- H** High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area

### Commodity Symbols

- Ag** Silver
- Au** Gold



**Whitewater  
Mineral Resource Potential**



**MAP-2  
CDCA-218A**



#### E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Increased nonmotorized recreation activities generated by designation will have a minor adverse impact on all wilderness values along the length of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail corridor, approximately five percent of the WSA. Continued cattle grazing will have a minor adverse impact to naturalness on lands common with the allotment, approximately 5000 acres. Throughout the remaining suitable area, impacts will be negligibly positive to naturalness because of the restrictions placed on fire suppression. Solitude along the southern boundary of the suitable portion of the WSA would be adversely affected if wind energy or residential or commercial development were to occur. In addition, solitude and naturalness would be adversely affected in the south-central portions of the WSA if any potential mineral development were to occur.
2. Impact on Native American Ritual and Collecting Activities: Permanent closure of half of a mile of access route to Red Dome and the constraints placed on mechanized equipment used for collection activities will cause negligible adverse impacts to this resource based on low use levels.
3. Impact on Future Flood Control: Above Whitewater Trout Farm, future projects will be precluded by wilderness designation. Downstream from the Trout Farm, the proposed action will cause no impacts to future flood control projects (See Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments).
4. Impact on Bighorn Sheep/Habitat: Negligible adverse impacts are expected to affect this species as increasing visitor use causes more disturbance. No impacts are anticipated for Bighorn habitat.
5. Impact on Locateable Mineral Exploration and Development: A negligible adverse impact is expected within the WSA for development due to low mineral potential.

#### F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore no further discussion of it will occur in this document.

#### G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phases were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parenthesis.



1. Inventory Phase: Most comments agreed with the findings on wilderness quality and natural condition. A few pointed out the existence of many roads and trails in the area.
2. Study Phase: Twenty-three comments were received on WSA 218A. Sixteen favored wilderness designation. The major reasons were outstanding wilderness quality and proximity to the San Geronio Wilderness System.

Several respondents noted the area's closeness to metropolitan areas and its superior wilderness opportunities. Huge desert washes, swampy oases, hanging valleys, box canyons, deep gorges, and countless waterfalls are all found here. One respondent noted that the hiker can travel from the low desert to a heavily glaciated tundra within the WSA (the tundra regions referred to are located within the San Bernardino National Forest).

A coalition of conservation organizations urged wilderness consideration because of the nearby San Geronio Wilderness and RARE II lands. The State Resources Board made the same request. The passage near this area of the Pacific Crest Trail was another common reason. The area's variety of flora and fauna, bighorn sheep and burros, and a high density of snakes were noted, as was the year-round flow of the Whitewater River and Mission Creek, a rare occurrence in the desert.

Opponents of wilderness designation mentioned the presence of roads and transmission lines which they felt detracted from wilderness values (located outside WSA boundaries). The presence of large amounts of private holdings was believed to interfere with solitude and primitive recreation.

The Army Corps of Engineers asked for coordination during the decision-making process, since they considered dam and debris basin sites within the WSA for flood control for the Coachella Valley. This concern was also expressed by the Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District.

A few respondents believed that ORV use was the desirable activity in this location.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: Few comments specific to this WSA were received in response to the Draft Plan Alternatives. The Army Corps of Engineers, the Riverside County Flood Control District, and the Coachella Valley Water District, made the same request to delete lands needed for flood control purposes. The Coachella Valley Association of Governments recommended wilderness for the area, with a modification to allow a possible flood control project. The National Outdoor Coalition (NOC), a coalition of mining, rockhounding, and ORV groups, recommended a nonwilderness



alternative for the area. The Sierra Club and other conservation organizations spoke out strongly for wilderness designation of the entire WSA. Members of these organizations sent in thousands of letters and coupons supporting these views.

Southern California Edison Company noted that the southern portion of the WSA overlaps an area they have determined is a good wind resource and that wind turbines should be allowed in this area.

4. Proposed Plan: Comments were similar to those received for the Draft Alternatives.



APPENDIX 1  
ESTIMATED COSTS OF ACQUISITION OF NON-FEDERAL HOLDINGS WITHIN  
AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR DESIGNATION  
WHITEWATER WSA (CDCA-218A)

PARCEL No.	LEGAL DESCRIPTION				TOTAL ACREAGE	NUMBER OF OWNERS	TYPE OF OWNERSHIP BY ESTATE		PRESENTLY PROPOSED FOR ACQUISITION	PREFERRED METHOD OF ACQUISITION	ESTIMATED COST OF ACQUISITION	
	TWNSHP	RNG	SEC	MERIDIAN			SURFACE ESTATE	SUBSURFACE ESTATE			LAND COSTS (\$1000)	PROCESSING COSTS (\$1000)
1	2S.	3E.	19	SBM	40	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	PURCHASE	4.0	2.5
2	2S.	3E.	19	SBM	40	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	PURCHASE	4.0	2.5
3	2S.	3E.	19	SBM	40	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	PURCHASE	4.0	2.5
4	2S.	3E.	19	SBM	40	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	PURCHASE	4.0	2.5
5	2S.	3E.	30	SBM	40	1	PRIVATE	PRIVATE	YES	PURCHASE	4.0	2.5

These figures were derived from Bureau Land Records and provide for more detail than GIS estimates and therefore may differ from acreage summaries in Table 1.



# **Saddle Peak Mountains**

*CDCA 219*







SADDLE PEAK MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-219)

1. THE STUDY AREA      9,763 acres

The Saddle Peak Mountains Wilderness Study Area is located in San Bernardino County within the north central portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The community of Baker is 38 miles to the south. The WSA includes 9,134 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and 629 acres owned by the State of California (See Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA is bounded to the east by State Route 127 and the north by a mine access road. Death Valley National Monument adjoins on the west, and a mining access road forms the southern boundary. The WSA is within a future utility corridor (1990-2020) identified for the State of California, in the Western Regional Corridor Study (1980).

The WSA was included for further consideration during the planning process primarily because the western border of the WSA abuts administratively endorsed wilderness in Death Valley National Monument.

The area includes the Saddle Peak Hills which form the western three quarters of the WSA and the northwestern portion of the Silurian Valley. The Saddle Peak Hills are cut by normal faults which are mostly wavy or curved with a northwest trend. The WSA contains approximately 70% mountains, 10% alluvial fans, 10% sand-covered dissected fans, and 10% sand-covered fans. Elevations range from approximately 500 feet on the valley floor to 2,500 feet at the western border. The vegetative composition includes a typical creosote bush scrub plant assemblage that exhibits some variability based on elevations.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced, and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

2.	<u>RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE</u> ---	0	acres recommended for wilderness
		9,134	BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for the Saddle Peak Mountains WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. Under this recommendation, future activities in the area will be controlled by moderate intensity management guidelines. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.



The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan and further explained in the California Wilderness Study Overview.

The lack of high quality wilderness values, the value of known and potential mineral and energy deposits, potential for development of a utility corridor and increases in vehicle dependant recreation use were determined to be of greater significance than the area's value as wilderness. There are approximately 7 miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.

Designation of this area as wilderness would not contribute any additional unique or distinct features to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Other WSAs in the California Desert that are recommended suitable offer a more extensive and diverse representation of desert wilderness values.

The WSA is adjacent to Death Valley National Monument's administratively endorsed wilderness. While designation of this WSA as wilderness would compliment the existing management of the Monument, the wilderness values within the Monument would not be adversely impacted by the nonwilderness recommendation.

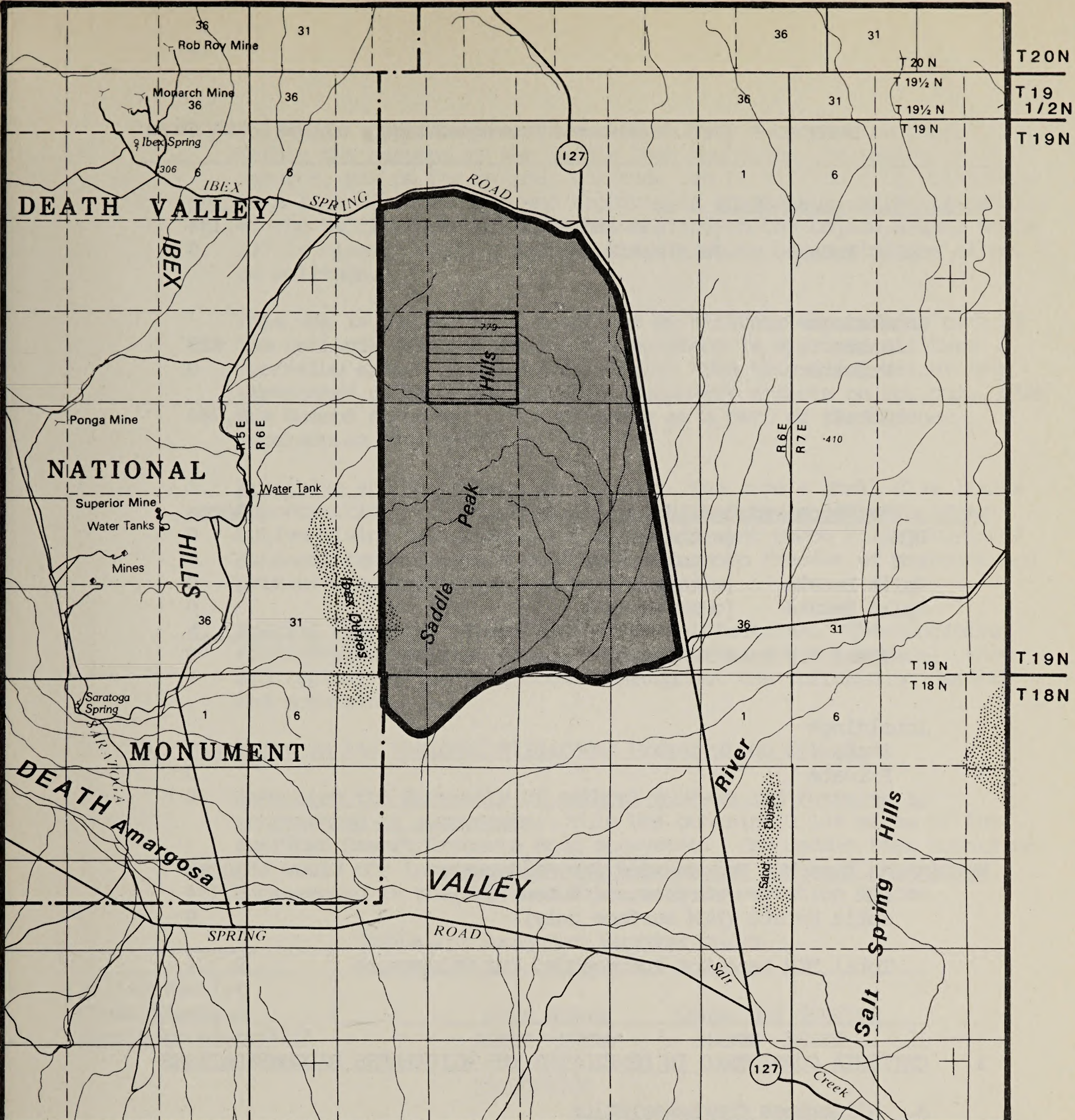
Opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation in the WSA are limited by the small, narrow size of the area. Active mining operations on the east boundary the Monument adjacent to the WSA tend to isolate the WSA from the wilderness values within the remainder of the Monument. The scenery is ordinary. The vegetative and wildlife resources within the WSA are common. There are no significant cultural resource values or Native American concerns.

The entire WSA has moderate potential for geothermal energy resources. Portions of the WSA have high potential for talc and moderate potentials for silver, gold, and copper. Past producing mines are located within the WSA. The evidence of surface disturbance still remains. There is one active operation involving mineral exploration within the WSA. There are 28 mining claims within the WSA on record with the BLM as of December, 1987.

Current recreation use is considered low. However, potentials for expansion of vehicle dependent opportunities are good given the limited but well defined internal access routes. Any additional routes created for mining exploration and development would also increase motorized vehicle recreation opportunities.

The WSA would be best managed and maintained under nonwilderness and moderate intensity management guidelines as prescribed in the CDCA Plan. Adjacent values in Death Valley National Monument would not be impacted and the mineral potential of the area could be fully realized.





NONE

RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS

RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS

RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS

LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS

LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS

SPLIT ESTATE

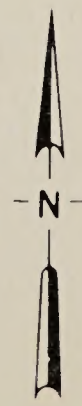
SPLIT ESTATE

STATE

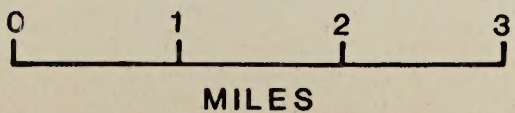
STATE

PRIVATE

PRIVATE



**Saddle Peak Mountains  
Proposal  
MAP-1**



CDCA-219  
JUNE, 1988



TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	9,134
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		629
Private		0
Total		<u>9,763</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	9,134
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>9,134</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The area generally appears to have been affected primarily by natural forces. However, active mining claims and mines are found in both the northern and southern portions of the WSA and are substantially noticeable in the immediate area. Several routes provide access into the interior of the WSA and detract from natural values.



2. Solitude: Opportunities for solitude vary from poor to good. Within the canyons of the Saddle Peak Mountains, isolation is assured, yet on the bajada, solitude can be difficult to obtain due to a lack of vegetation and topographic screening. In the foothills of the Saddle Peak Hills themselves, and on the bajada, State Route 127 is clearly visible and the traffic noise has a limiting affect on solitude.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense reparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The area's small size limits opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation. Active mining operations within the adjacent Death Valley National Monument tend to have a confining effect on freedom of movement and primitive recreational opportunities.
4. Special Features: There are no special features. The landforms, ecological diversity, and geologic features are not unusual, they are typical of features common throughout the surrounding deserts and mountains.

#### B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 9,134 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush ecosystem. The Saddle Peak Mountains WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification <u>Domain/Province/PNV</u>	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,258,775
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,644,971



2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of five major population centers. Table 1 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

<u>Population Centers</u>	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of seven BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness area is Dome Land Wilderness, administered by Sequoia National Forest, 100 miles west.

#### C. Manageability

The Saddle Peak Mountains WSA is manageable as wilderness. However, the additional effort that would be necessary to manage the area for wilderness is not justified given the low quality wilderness values that are present.

The area has known and potential mineral values. Active mineral exploration continues in the WSA. Full-scale development of any valid claims has a high potential to impact significant portions of the area. Access requirements for such developments would result in similar impacts.

Development and any necessary access to the private inholding would desecrate the entire WSA due to its central location within the WSA.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.



#### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

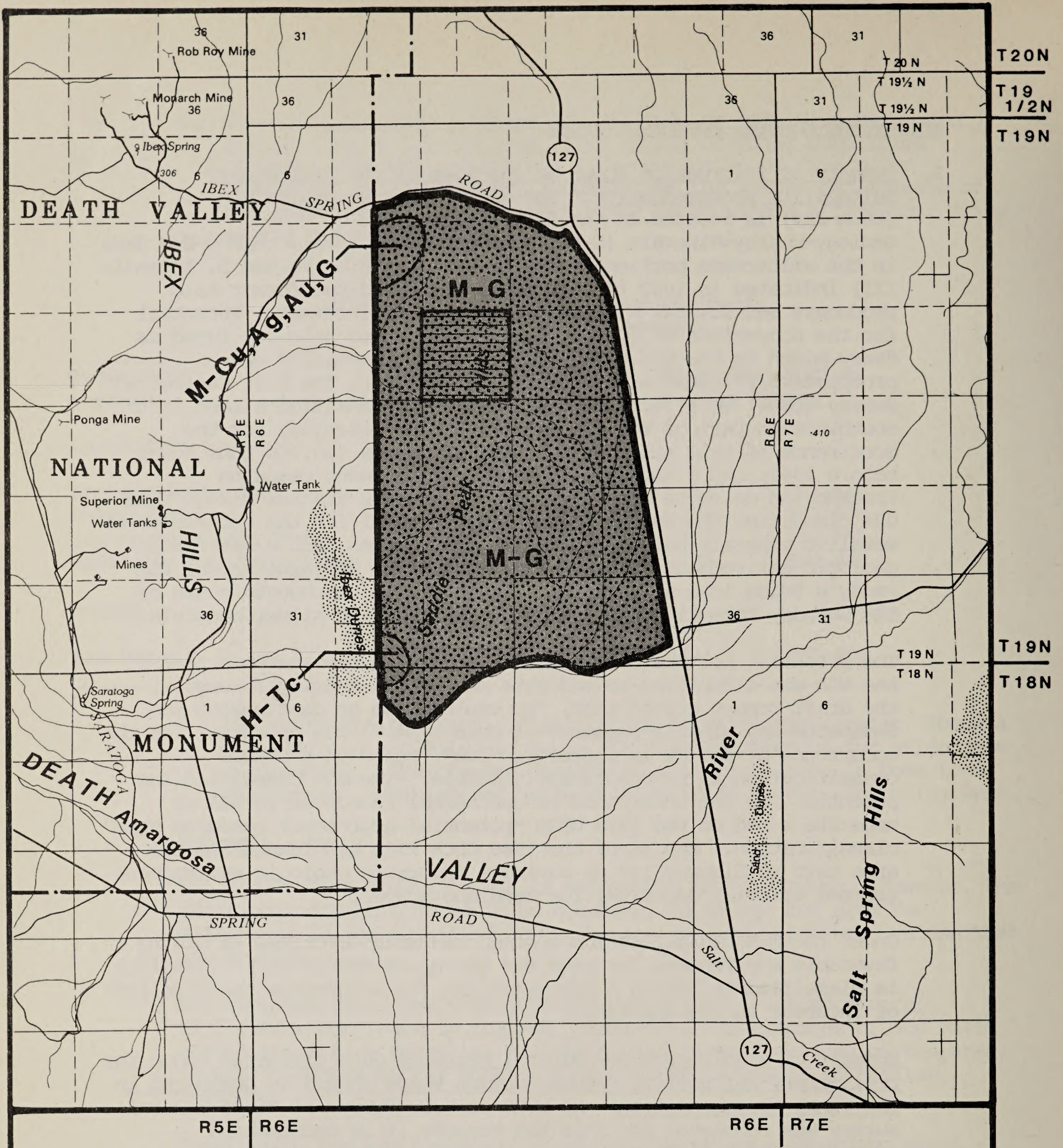
1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The Saddle Peak Mountains WSA (CDCA-219) is located in the BLM Dumont Dunes Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M data in the wilderness portion of the Desert Plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) indicated in 1980 that this WSA contained two former talc producers and several mineral commodities of interest. Potential for the occurrence of copper, lead, silver, and talc was rated as "very high" in the GRA file. The area was classified as prospectively valuable for geothermal energy by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) in 1978. The BLM GRA report classified a zone in the southwestern part of the WSA as having high potential for the occurrence of talc based on two past producers (20,700 tons total before 1968) and a favorable geologic environment cased on Precambrian dolomite rock altered by intruding diabase dikes. The GRA classifies the WSA as having low potential for the occurrence of metallic minerals based on no known occurrences, but a favorable geologic environment which is very similar to the area around the Paddy's Pride lead-silver mine. At this mine, carbonate rocks of the Noonday formation were altered with lead and silver minerals.

The potential for the occurrence of sodium in the southern part of the WSA was classified as moderate on the GRA overlays; however, the draft report stated that, "no exploration or development has indicated any mineral resource of this type." The potential for the occurrence of sodium is therefore "low", based on the USGS classification as prospectively valuable. The GRA classified the potential for the occurrence of geothermal resources in WSA as moderate based on the 1978 USGS "potential geothermal resource area" classification. Map 14 of the 1980 CDCA Plan has identified the area next to Highway 127 as having a favorable geologic environment (stream alluvial deposits) for sand and gravel.

Under the BLM classification system, the area described as having a favorable environment for sand and gravel resources in the GRA file is classified as having a low potential for occurrence based on lack of interest in the deposit.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the preliminary suitability recommendation which should be onsidered in the final recommendation: No USGS or U.S. Bureau of Mines mineral survey was completed for this WSA because it is recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation. In 1981, a plan of operations was received for access and drilling on the Good Enough #1 and #2 lode claims in the northwest part of the WSA. An area of mineralized rock with two fracture zones was explored by an adit on the same claims prior to the 1981 plan of operations. The claimant's assay reports indicate 5.6% copper, 30.2 ounces per ton





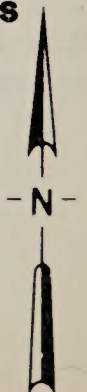
<b>NONE</b>	Recommended for Wilderness
	Recommended for Non Wilderness
	Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness
	Split Estate
	State
	Private

### Explanation

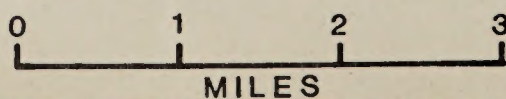
	High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
	Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
<b>M</b>	Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area
<b>H</b>	High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area

### Commodity Symbols

<b>Ag</b>	Silver
<b>Au</b>	Gold
<b>Cu</b>	Copper
<b>G</b>	Geothermal
<b>Tc</b>	Talc



**Saddle Peak Mountains  
Mineral Resource Potential**



**MAP-2  
CDCA-219**



silver, and 0.012 ounces per ton of gold. This area is classified under the BLM classification system as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of these resources.

Although there are presently no producing mines in the WSA, exploration interest remains high as indicated by the activity mentioned above and the unpatented mining claims which are summarized in the following table taken from BLM records dated December, 1987.

Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
MINING CLAIM						
Lode	N/A	3	3	N/A	60	60
Placer	N/A	25	25	N/A	1,000	1,000
Mill Site	N/A	0	0	N/A	0	0
Total	N/A	28	28	N/A	1,060	1,060

#### E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Noise, surface disturbance and access requirements for mineral and energy exploration and development will result in moderate adverse impacts on naturalness, solitude, and primitive and unconfined types of recreation. The entire WSA has identified energy and mineral potentials. Increased OHV opportunities and subsequent use, as a result of new access routes for exploration and development, will also cause adverse impacts to wilderness values.
2. Impact on administratively endorsed wilderness in death valley national monument: There will be no adverse impacts to management of the adjacent Monument. Although the administratively endorsed wilderness would be enhanced by designation of WSA 219, values in the Monument have sufficient quality and depth to stand on their own.
3. Impact on motorized vehicle recreation opportunities: Motorized vehicle recreation use opportunities will continue to be available to the OHV enthusiast. These use levels are expected to increase over time.
4. Impact on locateable and leasable mineral exploration and development: Opportunities for future exploration and development would continue to be available subject to applicable laws and regulations and the guidelines identified in the CDCA Plan.
5. Impact on western regional corridor study proposal: The study's proposed corridor would not be affected by the non-suitable recommendation. Analysis of the corridor proposal would be handled under guidelines established by the CDCA Plan.



F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: Most comments received supported inclusion of the area.
2. Study Phase: Six comments were received on this WSA. Four favored and two opposed wilderness designation. Proponents stated that contiguity to administratively endorsed wilderness in Death Valley National Monument enhanced manageability of the unit. They mentioned the scenic quality of the colorful, relatively barren hills and the opportunities for primitive recreation such as hiking and photography.

The two letters opposing wilderness were concerned over mining scars, roads, and the geothermal potential of the area.

Two comments were received in response to the Public Input Workbook (3/15/79). The National Park Service at Death Valley National Monument supported wilderness designation for this WSA because of its contiguity with the Monument and because it would protect the integrity of, and prevent unauthorized access to, Ibex Dunes within the Monument. One individual opposed wilderness because of roads leading to mines.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: Few public comments specific to this WSA were received in response to the Draft Plan Alternatives. However, this WSA was one of those opposed by the National Outdoor Coalition, a coalition of mining, rockhounding, and off-road vehicle groups. A large number of club members sent in printed forms supporting a multiple use classification of "moderate use" for the WSA which was in agreement with the recommendation of both the Use Alternative and the Balanced Alternative. Conservation groups either supported the Protection Alternative, which recommended "limited use" for the unit or requested that the area be designated wilderness. Some additional comments mentioned geothermal and oil and gas potential and expressed a preference for the Use Alternative.



4. Proposed Plan: There were few specific comments on this WSA in response to the Proposed Plan. Conservationists were displeased with what they considered to be an insufficient amount of wilderness recommended by the Proposed Plan, but no specific comments were made about this particular WSA. The Plan recommended "moderate use" for this area.

No comments were received from local governments.







# **South Saddle Peak Mountain**

*CDCA 220*







SOUTH SADDLE PEAK MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-220)

1. THE STUDY AREA ---

6,630 acres

The South Saddle Peak Mountains WSA is located in San Bernardino County within the north-central portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The community of Baker is 38 road miles to the south. The WSA includes 6,190 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and 440 acres owned by the State of California (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA is bounded to the east by State Route 127 and the north by a mining access road. Death Valley National Monument adjoins on the west and the gravel Harry Wade Road forms the southern boundary. The WSA has a "peninsula", approximately two miles long and 0.25 miles wide, that extends west from the body of the WSA around the southeastern corner of the National Monument. Portions of the WSA are within a future utility corridor identified for the State of California.

The WSA was included for further consideration during the planning process primarily because the western border of the WSA abuts an administratively endorsed wilderness area in Death Valley National Monument.

The area includes the Saddle Peak Hills which form the western edge of the WSA and the northwestern portion of the Silurian Valley which is drained by the Amargosa River. The Saddle Peak Hills are cut by normal faults which are mostly wavy or curved with a northwest trend. The WSA contains approximately 80% sand-covered plains, 10% hills, 5% mountains and 5% sand-covered fans. The area contains elevations that range from approximately 500 feet in the valley floor to 2,500 feet at the western border. The vegetative composition includes a typical creosote bush scrub plant assemblage that exhibits some variability based on elevations.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0 acres recommended for  
wilderness

6,190 BLM acres recommended for  
nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for the South Saddle Peak Mountains WSA. Under this recommendation, the entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. Future activities in the area will be controlled by moderate intensity management guidelines. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.



The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan and further explained in the California Wilderness Study Overview.

Low wilderness qualities, the value of potential energy deposits, and potential for development of utility and off-highway vehicle (OHV) corridors were of greater significance than the area's value as wilderness. Designation of this area as wilderness would not contribute any additional unique or distinct features to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Other WSAs in the California Desert that are recommended suitable offer a more extensive and diverse representation of desert wilderness values. There are approximately 4.5 miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.

No significant resources of Death Valley National Monument would be impacted by the nonwilderness recommendation. The adjacent portion of the National Monument contains administratively endorsed wilderness. While designation of WSA 220 as wilderness would compliment the existing management of the Monument, the wilderness values within the Monument stand on their own merit without WSA 220.

The entire area is rather mundane. Opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation in the WSA are limited by the restrictive size of the area. The scenery is monotonous. The vegetative and wildlife resources within the WSA are common throughout the surrounding desert. The area contains no unusual plants or State or Federally listed threatened or endangered plant or animal species. There are no significant cultural resource values or Native American concerns.

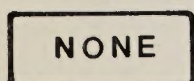
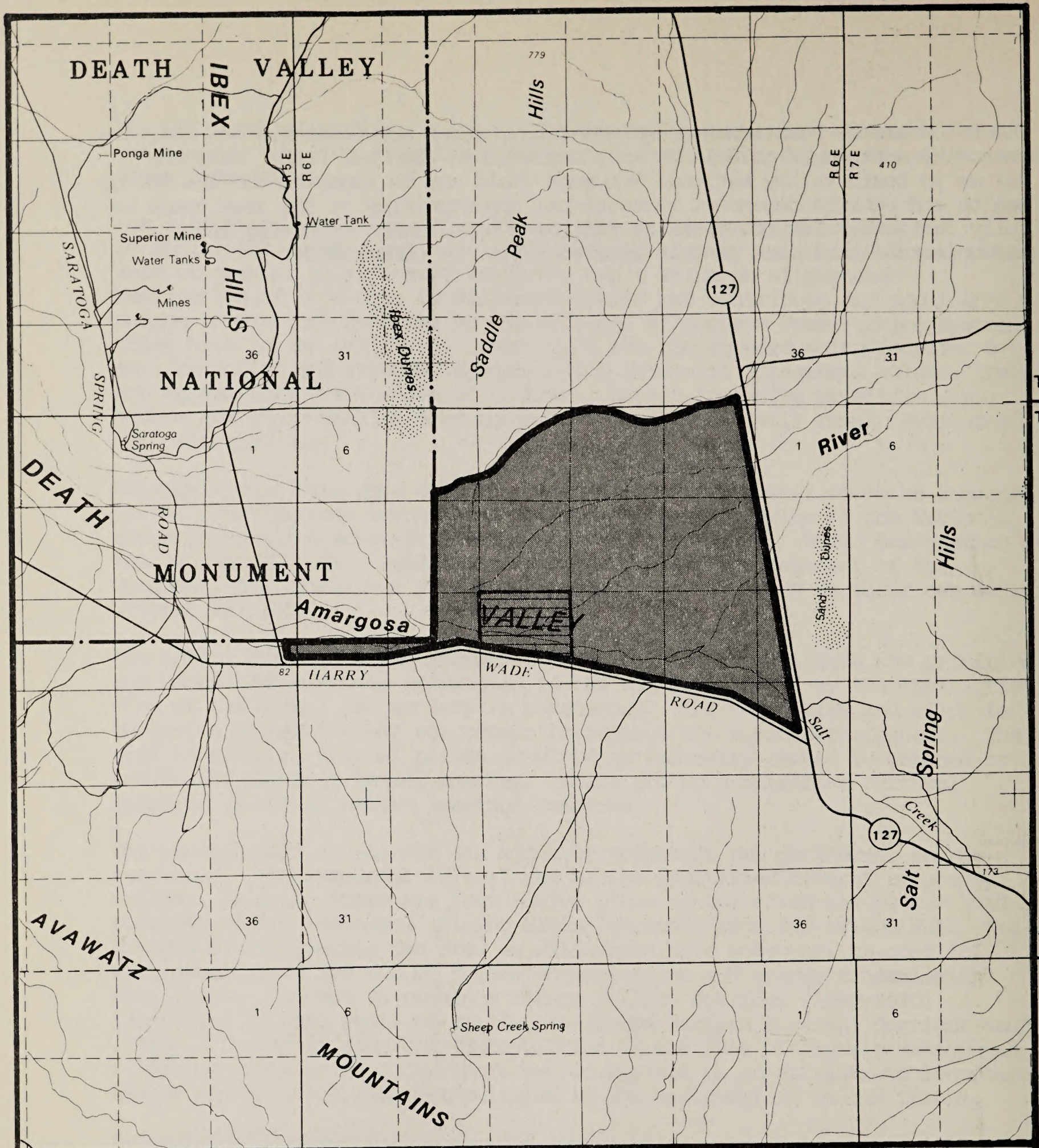
The western half of the WSA has moderate potential for geothermal energy resources. The remainder of the area has no identified mineral or energy values. However, there are four active plans of operation for placer gold reserves within the area. Mining claims encumber over 45% of the WSA. The impacts of designating the area as wilderness have potential to conflict with development and use of future communication and energy transmission facilities. The WSA is within a future utility corridor (1990-2020) identified for the State of California in the Western Regional Corridor Study (1980). Depending upon the juxtaposition of the WSAs ultimately designated wilderness within the CDCA, there may or may not be constraints to long-term energy and communication transmission in the southwestern United States.

Potentials for expansion of vehicle dependant recreational opportunities are excellent even though current recreation use is considered low. The State of California, Off-Highway Vehicle Division, identified a possible trail corridor through a portion of the WSA. If designated, this trail segment would become part of the California Statewide Motorized Trail System.



The WSA would be best managed and maintained under nonwilderness and moderate intensity management guidelines as prescribed in the CDCA Plan. Adjacent values in Death Valley National Monument would not be impacted and the energy wealth and vehicle dependant recreational opportunities of the area could be fully realized. Future scenarios regarding development of energy and communication corridors in this area would not be constrained.





RECOMMENDED FOR  
WILDERNESS



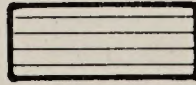
RECOMMENDED FOR  
NONWILDERNESS



LAND OUTSIDE WSA  
RECOMMENDED FOR  
WILDERNESS



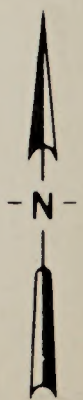
SPLIT ESTATE



STATE



PRIVATE



South Saddle Peak Mountain  
Proposal  
MAP-1

0 1 2 3  
MILES

CDCA-220  
JUNE, 1988



TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	6,190
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		440
Private		0
Total		<u>6,630</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	6,190
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>6,190</u>

### 3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

#### A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The area generally appears to have been affected primarily by natural forces and is largely void of human intrusions. One vehicle route provides access into the interior of the WSA.
2. Solitude: Opportunities for solitude are very limited due to the area's small restrictive size and lack of topographic or vegetative screening. State Route 127 and Harry Wade Road are visible from almost every corner of the WSA. Potentials for solitude in the "peninsula" extension are virtually nonexistent.



This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The area's restrictive size limits opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation. Active mining operations within the adjacent Death Valley National Monument tend to have a confining effect on freedom of movement.
4. Special Features: There are no special features. The landforms, ecological diversity, and geologic features are not unusual, they are typical of features common throughout the surrounding deserts and mountains.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 6,190 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush ecosystem. The South Saddle Peak Mountains WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented within the National Wilderness Preservation System. The American Desert Province-creosote bush (Larrea) assemblage, as defined by Bailey and Kuchler, is well represented in other WSAs in the California Desert that are recommended suitable for wilderness designation.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,261,719
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,647,915

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of five major population centers. Table 1 summarizes the number and acreages of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.



Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of six BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness area is Dome Land Wilderness, administered by Sequoia National Forest, 100 miles west.

#### C. Manageability

The South Saddle Peak Mountains WSA is manageable as wilderness. However, the following items have the potential to complicate management of the area as wilderness.

The area has identified energy resource values. Active mineral exploration for placer gold occurs in the WSA. Over 2,900 acres of the WSA are encumbered with 73 mining claims. Full scale development of any valid claims has a high potential to impact the wilderness values in the entire area due to the homogeneous nature of the terrain. Access requirements for such developments would result in similar impacts.

Mineral and/or surface development of the private inholding likewise has the potential to despoil the wilderness values within the entire WSA because of their location and the lack of topographic diversity.

The adjacent administratively endorsed wilderness in Death Valley National Monument currently augments the limited wilderness values within the WSA. The block of administrative wilderness within the Monument, on the contrary, is of much larger size than WSA 220 and stands on its own merits. However, should the administrative endorsement within the Monument be withdrawn, the South Saddle Peak WSA does not have sufficient wilderness values to stand on its own as wilderness.



Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The South Saddle Peak Mountains WSA is located in the Dumont Dunes Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M data in the Desert Plan EIS indicated in 1980 that the WSA was prospectively valuable for sodium compounds and geothermal energy, and had a "very good" potential for the occurrence of talc. The prospectively valuable classifications for sodium compounds and geothermal resources were provided by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) prospectively valuable maps (1979 and 1980, respectively). In 1979, the western portion of the WSA was proposed for classification by the USGS, as recorded with BLM.

The GRA file indicated high potential for the occurrence of talc in the northwestern part of the WSA. The potential for the occurrence of talc was based on findings in the BLM GRA report (1980) indicating that talc deposits were known to occur in Precambrian metasedimentary (metamorphic) rocks intruded and altered by diabase dikes, similar to those which crop out in the extreme western and northwestern portion of the WSA.

The GRA file classified the western part of the WSA as having moderate potential for the occurrence of geothermal resources and the entire WSA as having moderate potential for the occurrence of sodium compounds. This classification is used where saline minerals are known to be present. However, since there are no known saline minerals in this area, the potential is low for the occurrence of sodium in WSA 220.

2. Summary of Significant New Mineral Resource Data Collected Since the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation Which Should be Considered in the Final Recommendation: No USGS or U.S. Bureau of Mines mineral survey was conducted for this WSA because it is recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation. There is no known mineral production in the WSA.

Recent interest in placer gold has been expressed in the form of four plans of operations filed with BLM in 1983 and 1984 for test drilling, sampling, and gold recovery testing. The majority of the WSA is covered by an unknown thickness of alluvium (sand and gravel) formed from outwash drainage of past gold producing areas such as the Salt Spring Hills.



The Rainbow (talc) Mine, immediately north of the WSA, and also in the Saddle Peak Hills, produced about 13,800 tons of talc between 1956 and 1959 (from Wright, Lauren A., 1968: Talc Deposits of the Southern Death Valley - Kingston Range Region, California: California Division of Mines and Geology, Special Report 95, p. 63, Plate 2D). The map in special report 95, however, does not show the talc deposit extending into the WSA.

Unpatented placer mining claims are concentrated in the southern and northwestern portion of the WSA. Unpatented mining claims in the WSA are summarized in the following table taken from BLM records dated December, 1987.

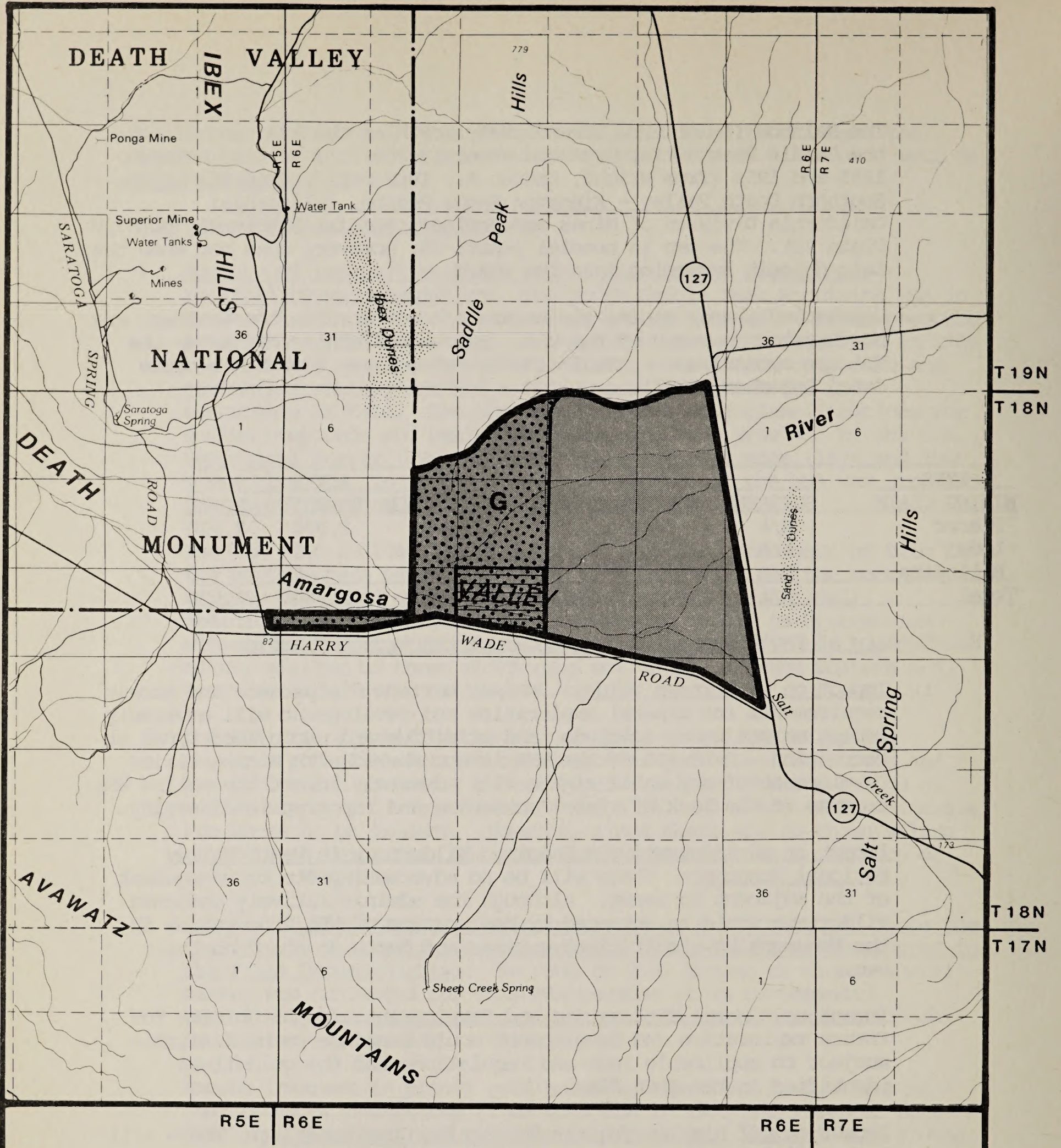
Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE MINING CLAIM	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
Placer	N/A	73	73	N/A	2,920	2,920
Lode	N/A	0	0	N/A	0	0
Mill Site	N/A	0	0	N/A	0	0
Total	N/A	73	73	N/A	2,920	2,920

E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Noise, surface disturbance and access requirements for mineral exploration and development will adversely impact naturalness, solitude, and primitive and unconfined types of recreation. Over 45% of the WSA is encumbered with mining claims. Development of any valid rights will adversely impact the entire WSA because of the lack of visual screening and topographic diversity.
2. Impact on Administratively Endorsed Wilderness in Death Valley National Monument: There will be no adverse impacts to management of the adjacent Monument. Although the administratively endorsed wilderness would be enhanced by designation of WSA 220, values in the Monument have sufficient caliber and depth to stand on their own.
3. Impact on Mineral Exploration and Development: Opportunities for future exploration and development would continue to be available subject to applicable laws and regulations and the guidelines identified in the CDCA Plan.
4. Impact on Off Highway Vehicle Recreation Opportunities: There will be beneficial impacts to recreational vehicle travel by not designating the area as wilderness. Planning and development of the California statewide OHV trails system will not be constrained.





**NONE**

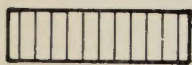
Recommended for  
Wilderness



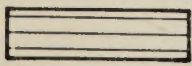
Recommended for  
Non Wilderness



Land outside WSA  
Recommended for  
Wilderness



Split Estate



State



Private

### Explanation



High Potential for the  
Occurrence of Energy and/or  
Non-energy Minerals



Moderate Potential for the  
Occurrence of Energy and/or  
Non-energy Minerals

**M**

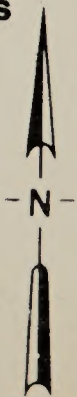
Moderate Mineral Potential  
Location in a High Mineral  
Potential Area

**H**

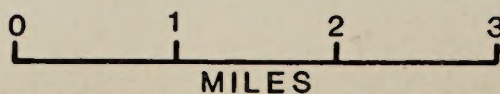
High Mineral Potential  
Location in a Moderate Mineral  
Potential Area

### Commodity Symbols

**G** Geothermal



**South Saddle Peak Mountain  
Mineral Resource Potential**



**MAP-2  
CDCA-220**



5. Impact on Future Utility Corridor Development: Portions of the WSA are within a future utility corridor (1990-2020) identified for the State of California in the Western Corridor Study (1980). This corridor was not identified or designated by the CDCA Plan. However, depending upon the final juxtaposition of WSAs ultimately designated wilderness in the CDCA, there may or may not be constraints to development of future utility corridors.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: The few comments received referred to mineral potential in the area and challenged the evaluation of the area as less than 5,000 acres in size. Others supported further wilderness consideration because of the adjacent administratively endorsed wilderness in Death Valley National Monument.
2. Study Phase: Only four comments were received on WSA 220. Three opposed wilderness because of its unsuitability for wilderness due to size, impacts of man, and potential for oil and gas and geothermal resources.

One respondent supported further wilderness study because it is contiguous with Death Valley National Monument.

One comment was received in response to the Public Input Workbook (3/15/79). The National Park Service at Death Valley National Monument supported wilderness designation for this area.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: Few public comments specific to WSA 220 were received in response to the Draft Plan Alternatives. However, this WSA was one of those opposed by the National Outdoor Coalition, a coalition of mining, rockhounding, and off-highway vehicle groups. A large number of club members sent in printed forms supporting a multiple use classification of "moderate use" for the WSA which was in agreement with the recommendation of both the Use Alternative and the Balanced Alternative.



Conservation groups either supported the Protection Alternative, which recommended "limited use" for the unit or requested that the area be designated wilderness. Some additional comments mentioned geothermal and oil and gas potential and expressed a preference for the Use Alternative.

4. Proposed Plan: There were few specific comments on this WSA in response to the Proposed Plan. Conservationists were displeased with what they considered to be an insufficient amount of wilderness recommended by the Proposed Plan, but no specific comments were made about this particular WSA. The Plan recommended "moderate use" for this area.

No comments were received from local governments.



# **Avawatz Mountains**

*CDCA 221*







## AVAWATZ MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-221)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA ---

108,992 acres

The Avawatz Mountains WSA is located in San Bernardino County within the central northeast portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The community of Baker is ten miles from the southeast tip of the WSA. The WSA includes 101,000 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), 6,191 acres owned by the State of California and 1,801 acres of private land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA is bounded to the east by State Route 127 and the gravel Silver Lake Road forms the southern boundary. Fort Irwin Military Reservation and a gravel road to Denning Spring make up the western border of the WSA. The northern boundary is formed by the gravel Harry Wade Road. A portion of the Harry Wade Road (1.5 miles) forms the only common boundary between the WSA and Death Valley National Monument.

A portion of the WSA is within a future utility corridor (1990-2020) identified for the State of California in the Western Regional Corridor Study (1980). The southwestern portion of the WSA is within an area identified in an expansion proposal for the adjacent Fort Irwin Military Reservation.

The WSA consists of the eastern portion of the large mountainous mass of the Avawatz Mountains which contain many colorful eroded slopes, rugged ridges, and steep-walled, narrow canyons. The mountains are flanked to the east by a deeply descending creosote-covered bajada which transforms into dry lake beds near State Route 127. White talc deposits dot the landscape at intervals and the northern portion provides outstanding views into Death Valley National Monument.

The WSA contains approximately 38% mountains, 20% alluvial fans, 20% dissected fans, 15% highly dissected fans, 2% playas, 2% badlands, 2% hills, and 1% river washes. Elevations rise from 680 feet near Silurian Dry Lake, to a 6,162-foot summit within only nine miles. The vegetative composition consists of a typical creosote bush scrub assemblage that exhibits some variability based upon elevation. Forty acres of the Denning Spring Cultural Resource Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) is located within the western portion of the WSA.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use balanced and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.



2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0 acres recommended for  
wilderness  
101,000 BLM acres recommended for  
nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for the Avawatz Mountains WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. Future activities in the area will be controlled by a combination of low and moderate intensity management as prescribed in the CDCA Plan. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan and further explained in the California Wilderness Study Overview.

Existing and potential mineral and energy resource values, potentials for motorized recreation, and several manageability issues are of greater significance than the area's value as wilderness. Designation of the area as wilderness would not contribute any additional unique or distinct features to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Other WSAs in the California Desert that are recommended suitable offer a much more extensive and diverse representation of desert wilderness values. There are approximately 25 miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.

The WSA contains a long history of mineral exploration and also a long but sporadic history of mineral development. Over 11,340 acres of the WSA are encumbered with mining claims. The WSA also contains 1,801 acres of private land, virtually all of which is patented talc mining claims. Significant portions of the WSA contain high potentials for gold, silver, iron, sodium, strontium, and gypsum and moderate potentials for copper, lead, silver, barite, dolomite, and limestone. The area also contains high potentials for geothermal resources and sand and gravel.

Development of any valid claims would seriously degrade the natural character of the area. Given the history of the area, recognized mineral potentials, and the 370 mining claims that encumber the high potential areas, the likelihood for valid, existing mineral rights and/or a major discovery is considered very high. In addition, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is dependant upon the high potential sand and gravel reserves along State Route 127 for maintenance of the highway system.

The amount of effort required to manage the area for maintenance of its wilderness values would be very substantial. In addition to conflicts with minerals, the WSA contains 6,191 acres (10 parcels) of land owned by the State of California and 1,801 acres of private land. Access to the State land would be virtually impossible without new road construction. Such access would seriously degrade the natural character of the entire area. Similar impacts would result from surface disturbing activities on the private land.



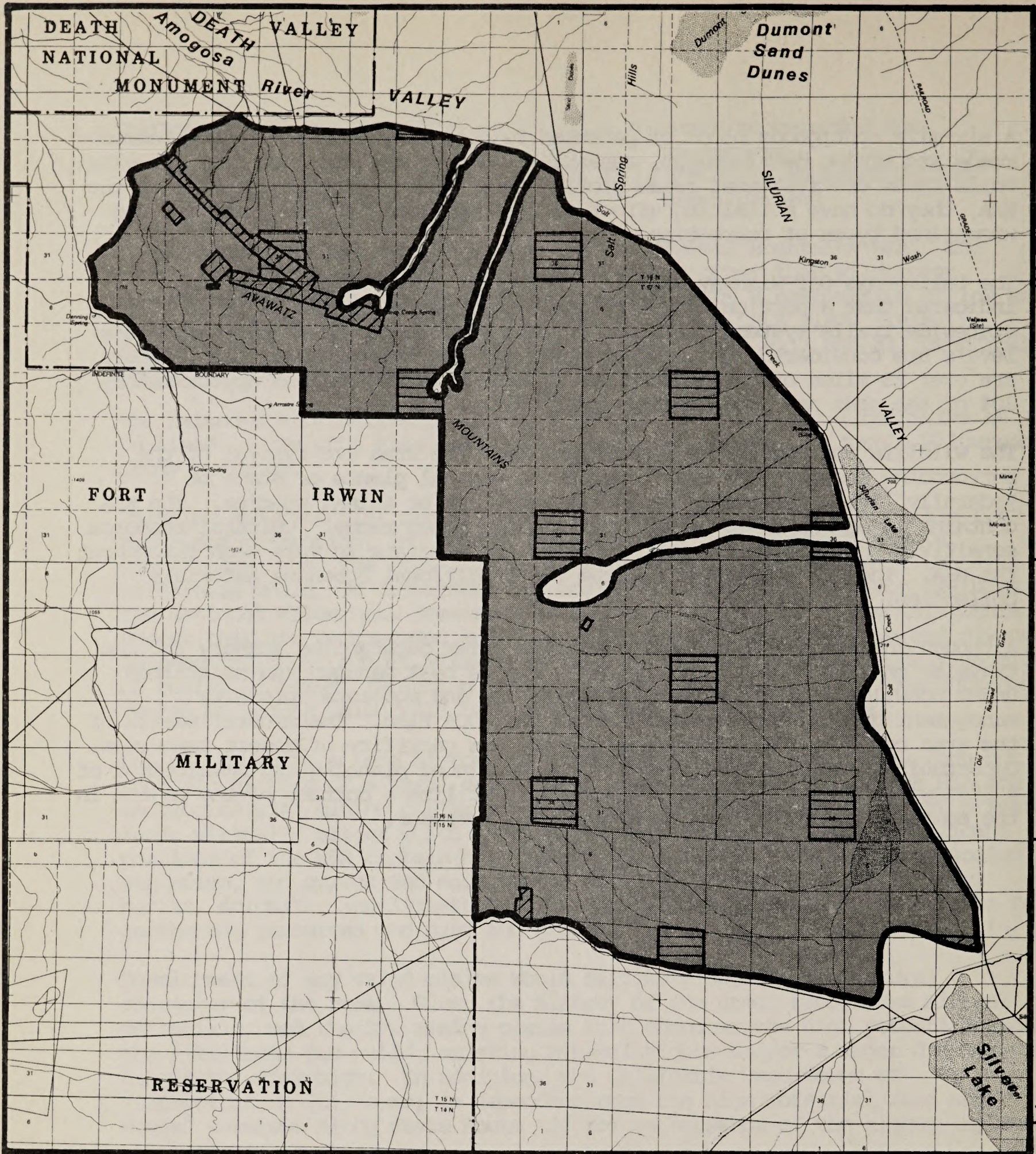
A six-mile contiguous block of patented talc claims, plus the cherrystemmed roads and mining developments, essentially divide the WSA into four subunits. While these cherrystemmed roads provide good access into the interior of the WSA, they do have a limiting affect on the opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation.

The California Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Draft State-Wide Trails Plan indicated that a portion of the bajada within the WSA could be included in a statewide trails system. Although current vehicle-dependent recreation use levels are considered low, the potential for increase are very high. There are over 25 miles of existing routes of travel in the WSA and approximately 30% of the area has good hunting opportunities for quail.

The wildlife and vegetative resources within the area are typical of the surrounding desert. The area contains no unusual plants or State or Federally listed threatened or endangered plant or animal species. The WSA contains 75 square miles of seasonal bighorn sheep range. Cultural resource sensitivity and Native American concerns are moderate to very high throughout the WSA. The WSA represents an area for traditional Shoshone materials collection.

Although the Avawatz Mountains themselves offer outstanding scenery for the traveler on State Route 127, the WSA would be best managed and maintained under nonwilderness and a combination of low and moderate intensity management guidelines as prescribed in the CDCA Plan. The mineral wealth of the area could be fully developed without the sacrifice of desert resources. Opportunities will be available for the continued planning and development of a Statewide OHV trails network which could utilize a portion of the bajada in the eastern edge of the WSA as a potential corridor.





NONE

RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS

RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS

LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS

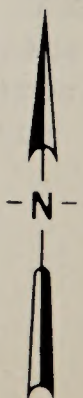
SPLIT ESTATE

STATE

PRIVATE

Avawatz Mountains  
Proposal  
MAP-1

0 1 2 3  
MILES



CDCA-221  
JUNE, 1988



TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	101,000
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		6,191
Private		1,801
Total		<u>108,992</u>

<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>

Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0

<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	101,000
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>101,000</u>

### 3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

#### A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The majority of the Avawatz Mountains WSA retains its primeval character and influence and appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature. Historic mining activity in the southwest portion, several mines on patented land in the northern portion of the WSA, and the 25 miles of access routes do adversely impact naturalness in localized areas.



2. Solitude: Outstanding opportunities for solitude are available. Spaciousness on the mountain peaks and large bajadas, combined with vistas into Death Valley National Monument, compliment the opportunities for solitude found in the narrow canyons and rugged mountain ridges which screen visitors from one another. On the bajadas, the lack of topographic diversity and vegetative screening, can have a limiting affect on opportunities.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The area provides for unconfined movement and primitive types of recreation. However, the cherrystemmed roads and private land essentially divide the WSA into four subunits. The limiting effect of these roads and private land would be most significant to users of the creosote covered bajadas. Lack of available water is aggravated by extreme summer heat and low humidity.
4. Special Features: Approximately 40 acres of the WSA are located within the Denning Springs ACEC. The actions in the management plan for this ACEC are designed to protect significant cultural resource values. The WSA also contains approximately 75 square miles of seasonal habitat for desert bighorn sheep, a BLM sensitive species. Otherwise, the landforms, ecological diversity, and geological features are not unique, they are typical of features common throughout the surrounding deserts and mountains.

#### B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 101,000 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush ecosystem. While the Avawatz Mountains are colorful, the WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems or features represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The WSA contains the American Desert Province - Creosote bush assemblage, as defined by Bailey and Kuchler, which is well represented in other WSAs in the CDCA that are recommended suitable for wilderness designation.



Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,166,909
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,553,105

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of eight major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
San Diego	15	1,043,680	100	3,378,814
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of 13 BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness area is Joshua Tree Wilderness, administered by Joshua Tree National Monument, 90 miles south of the WSA.



### C. Manageability

The Avawatz Mountains WSA is manageable as wilderness. However, there are several significant issues which would seriously complicate the ability to maintain the existing wilderness values into the future.

The WSA contains 10 parcels (6,191 acres) of land owned by the State of California and 1,801 acres of private land. If the area were designated wilderness, access to this land would be virtually impossible without new road construction. Such access would seriously degrade the natural character of the entire area. Similar impacts would result from development or uses that result in surface disturbances on the State or private land.

Some of the State land contains moderate and high potential for various mineral and energy resources. These lands are managed for income production, and development of these resources would be incompatible with wilderness values.

The likelihood for valid mineral rights and/or a major discovery are considered very high. Over 11,340 acres of the WSA are encumbered with 370 mining claims. Moderate and high potential mineralized areas are located primarily in the mountainous portion, near the terminus of the cherrystemmed roads. Mineral development, both within the WSA and at the terminus of the cherrystemmed roads, will serve to further break up the WSA and lessen the natural character of the area.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of Information Known at the Time of the Preliminary Suitability Recommendation: The Avawatz Mountains WSA is located in the BLM Avawatz Mountain Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M data in the Wilderness section of the Desert Plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) in 1980 indicated that resource data for this WSA had not been fully analyzed, integrated, and interpreted at the time the wilderness recommendation was made. However, it did identify known potential for halite, gypsum, strontium, talc, and limestone in the northern portion of the WSA, and possible potential for iron, gold, copper, silver, and other metals throughout the WSA. Also noted was a potential for geothermal energy, sodium, and oil and gas in the northern portion. Approximately 135 mining claims were recorded with BLM on December 12, 1979.

The GRA report supported the statements in the EIS. The report indicated past production of silver, iron, talc, and salt from the WSA, and past production of gold and iron just outside of the WSA. In 1871, high grade silver ore was discovered at the San Francisco lode (exact location unknown). In 1872, four and one-half tons of



silver ore valued at \$300 per ton were produced from the Summit Mine (exact location unknown). In 1888, mines or claims (exact location unknown) produced silver ore which was shipped to Barber's Mill at Calico, and to Reno, Nevada. It was probably at this time that salt was mined from the northwestern part of the WSA for use in reducing silver ore at the Ibex Mine, now in Death Valley National Monument. In 1907, a mine camp was built at Denning Spring, bordering the northwestern boundary of the WSA. Prospects contained gold, lead, silver, and copper. In 1911, four men were employed, but the amount of production is unknown. In 1908 and 1927, the Avawatz Crown silver mine, about two miles southwest of Old Mormon Spring (near center of WSA) was worked. Talc was produced sporadically near Sheep Creek in the northern part of the WSA. The deposit was included in three patented claims which have been cherrystemmed from the WSA. From 1951 to 1959, 20,000 tons of commercial talc were produced. Production continued intermittently since 1960. The Bat iron mine in the southwestern part of the WSA produced 30,000 tons of iron ore from 1967 to 1969. The Iron Mountain Mine, barely excluded from the southwest boundary of the WSA produced 700,000 tons prior to 1980.

An area of about six square miles of mostly patented claims in the northwest part of the WSA has high potential for the occurrence of salt, gypsum, and celestite (a strontium mineral). These evaporite minerals occur in Tertiary-age sediments in an area classified by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) as prospectively valuable for sodium in 1978. The following salt resources were identified on the patented claims. Jumbo: 1.5 million tons; Salt Basin: 3.9 million tons; Boston Valley: 15 million tons; King claims: 99,000 tons. Celestite resources within this area were estimated at nearly 300,000 tons of 81% SrO from 0-50 feet. Resource estimates for gypsum were not made. However, it was known that the gypsum occurred in two roughly parallel zones discontinuously exposed for a distance of about nine miles. Map 2 shows areas identified in the GRA file as having moderate to high potential for the occurrence of various mineral resources.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the preliminary suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final recommendation: No USGS or U.S. Bureau of Mines mineral survey was completed for this WSA because it is recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

In 1981, a plan of operations was filed for making 25 to 30 exploration trenches in the northwestern part of the WSA. Although the work was never conducted, the prospects for precious metals were located in diorite with hydrothermal quartz veins. Three plans of operation were filed between 1984 and 1986 for placer gold sampling in the northernmost part of the WSA. In 1986, U.S. Borax filed a plan of operation for exploration drilling at three sites in the southern part of the WSA. The 1986 USGS 15' Red Pass Lake NE



Quadrangle map shows a number of prospects within the high potential area for silver, near the center of the WSA. An adit (tunnel) and at least four other prospects are outside of the patented Morris claim.

Recent research by BLM has revealed that the right-of-way for Highway 127 does not extend beyond the width of disturbance. Therefore, Caltrans is dependent upon sand and gravel deposits in WSA's 221 and 222 as a source of aggregate for the maintenance of Highway 127 and the associated erosion-control dikes. The aggregate deposits along the eastern edge of the WSA have high potential for the occurrence of sand and gravel resources based on their present use for dikes to protect the highway from storm runoff descending the steep Avawatz alluvial fan. An asphalt mixing site has been excluded from the WSA (southeast boundary). The northern strip of the WSA for a width of 0.25 to 0.5 miles was classified by BLM as prospectively valuable for geothermal resources in 1987. Saratoga Spring, two miles to the north measured 82° F. This area has high potential for the occurrence of geothermal resources.

The WSA contains numerous patented mining claims in the northern portion of the Avawatz Mountains, and in the central and southwestern portion of the WSA. Numerous unpatented placer mining claims are concentrated in the northwestern, southern and northeastern portion of the WSA. Unpatented lode mining claims are concentrated in the southern and central portions of the WSA. Unpatented mining claims in the WSA are summarized in the following table taken from BLM mineral records dated December, 1987.

Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
MINING CLAIM						
Lode	N/A	171	171	N/A	3,420	3,420
Placer	N/A	198	198	N/A	7,920	7,920
Mill Site	N/A	1	1	N/A	5	5
Total	N/A	370	370	N/A	11,345	11,345

E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Noise, surface disturbance and access requirements for mineral and energy exploration and development will negatively impact naturalness, solitude, and primitive and unconfined types of recreation. Identified mineral and energy potentials are spread throughout the entire central portion of the WSA. Development and use of an OHV corridor across the bajada would also negatively impact wilderness values.
2. Impact on Minerals and Energy: Opportunities for exploration and development of minerals and energy will continue to be available subject to applicable laws, regulations and the low and moderate



intensity, multiple use management guidelines established in the CDCA Plan. Sand and gravel will continue to be available to Caltrans for maintenance of the State highway system.

3. Impact on Vehicle Dependant Recreation Opportunities: Vehicle dependant recreation use opportunities will continue to be available to the OHV user and hunters. Potential development of a portion of the Statewide OHV Statewide Trails System within the area would be allowed, if consistent with CDCA Plan guidelines.
4. Impact on Desert Bighorn Sheep Habitat: The area of seasonal bighorn sheep habitat within the WSA will continue to receive priority consideration over conflicting land uses according to the low intensity, multiple use management prescriptions contained in the CDCA Plan.
5. Impact on Future Utility Corridor Development: The WSA is within a planned utility corridor (1990-2020) for the State of California as identified in the Western Regional Corridor Study (1980). This corridor was not identified or designated in the CDCA Plan. However, development of this corridor could be considered under the guidelines established in the CDCA Plan.
6. Impact on ACEC, Cultural Resource Values, and Native American Concerns: Cultural Resource values in the Denning Spring ACEC will continue to be enhanced and protected by the ACEC Management Plan. Other areas of sensitivity, in addition to applicable laws and regulations, are afforded the additional protection of the low intensity multiple use guidelines in the CDCA Plan.
7. Impact on Adjacent Military Reservation: Scoping and analysis of the expansion proposal for Fort Irwin will not be constrained by the nonwilderness recommendation for the WSA.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: Those comments relative to the inventory dealt with the omission of roads to active mines within the Avawatz Mountains and with the area's superior wilderness qualities. After further field checks, changes were made where appropriate.







2. Study Phase: Thirty-two letters were received on this WSA. Seventeen opposed wilderness designation. Features which were listed as detracting from the area's wilderness quality were: a transmission line, the railroad, low-flying aircraft and sonic booms, Fort Irwin Bombing practice, roads, mineral activities, and motorized vehicle noise. Activities at the adjacent Fort Irwin Military Reservation were stressed, including the bombing practice, use of air defense, and weapon flying. One mining company said the WSA was too close to its mine (the Silver Lake Mine), while an energy concern claimed that the area has potential for oil and gas and for geothermal resources. One letter said the area was too flat to be wilderness; another discussed the hazards of mine shafts to unwary recreationists, and another the lack of water. Camping and rockhounding were popular activities, but protection of the valuable petroglyphs (not within WSA 221) was urged.

The 15 letters supporting wilderness designation for WSA 221 claimed that the Avawatz Mountain is a highly scenic but rugged and remote area where there is ample opportunity for solitude and primitive types of recreation. Indeed, they are a favorite area for wilderness activities for many respondents. A few letters mentioned that the northern portion of the WSA could provide a buffer between Fort Irwin and Death Valley National Monument. Popular wilderness type activities used in the region are scientific and education pursuits, as well as camping, hiking, photography, photography, sightseeing, and so forth.

Three comments were received in response to the Public Input Workbook (3/15/79). Some requested adjusting the study area boundaries to provide a buffer zone around access routes and mining claims. One respondent wanted a study area open to vehicle access except for motorized vehicle "racers."

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: Few public comments specific to this WSA were received in response to the Draft Plan Alternatives. However, this WSA was one of those opposed by the National Outdoor Coalition (NOC), a coalition of mining, rockhounding, and off-highway vehicle groups. A large number of club members sent in printed coupons supporting the NOC recommendation of a "moderate use" classification for the WSA; this was in agreement with the Use Alternative. Conservation oriented organizations favored the Protection Alternative which recommended wilderness designation for WSA 221. One letter preferred the No Action Alternative which would continue to permit the exploration and development of minerals, oil, gas, and geothermal resources as the best uses of the study area.
4. Proposed Plan: Few specific comments were made concerning this WSA. Vehicle-oriented recreationists, miners, rockhounters, and other members of the National Outdoor Coalition were partially satisfied, because part of the WSA was recommended as "moderate use;" this was actually the portion with the so-called mining roads and the flat topography which so many find inappropriate for wilderness.



Conservationists were disappointed that the area was not designated wilderness, although no specific comments were made on this WSA.

No comments were received from local governments.



# **South Avawatz Mountains**

*CDCA 221A*







SOUTH AVAWATZ MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-221A)

1. THE STUDY AREA ---

27,580 acres

The South Avawatz Mountains WSA is located in San Bernardino County within the central northeast portion of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The community of Baker is ten miles southeast of the WSA. The WSA includes 26,621 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), 750 acres owned by the State of California and 209 acres of private land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

This triangular WSA is bounded to the north by the Silver Lake Mine Road. The northwest boundary follows a drainage system to avoid evidence of previous mining activity. The Fort Irwin Military Reservation boundary makes up the western border of the WSA. The southeastern boundary is located along an imaginary line 400 feet north of three high voltage power transmission lines in place in 1979, except where the service road extends beyond the 400 feet and then the service road is the boundary. The WSA inventory narrative specifically excludes the southwest "lip" of the WSA along the Military Reservation boundary near Red Pass Lake. However, the official WSA map did not recognize this exclusion and it is therefore included within the WSA.

The southeastern portion of the WSA is located within a two mile wide utility corridor designated in the CDCA Plan. Other portions of the WSA are within a future utility corridor (1990-2020) identified for the State of California. Almost the entire WSA is within an area identified in an expansion proposal for the adjacent Fort Irwin Military Reservation.

The WSA contains the southernmost extension of the Avawatz Mountains. The mountains are highly dissected and contain steep-walled narrow canyons. The eastern half of the WSA encompasses a large bajada of coarse gravel and scattered boulders criss-crossed by many graveled washes. The WSA contains approximately 25% hills, 25% plains, 20% mountains, 10% dissected fans, 10% highly dissected fans, 5% alluvial fans, 3% pediments and 2% riverwashes. Elevations range from 880 feet at the eastern limit of the area's bajada to a maximum elevation of 3,270 feet in the southern Avawatz Mountains.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the CDCA Plan: protection, use, balanced and no action; a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0	acres recommended for wilderness
26,621	BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness



No wilderness is the recommendation for the South Avawatz Mountains WSA. The entire acreage in the WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. Future activities in the area will be controlled by a combination of low and moderate intensity management as prescribed in the CDCA Plan. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan and further explained in the California Wilderness Study Overview.

The wilderness qualities of the WSA are not outstanding. The mineral potential of the area, as well the need to keep the land available for utilization of a designated utility corridor, also influenced the nonsuitable recommendation. Designation of the area as wilderness would not contribute any additional unique or distinct features to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Other WSAs in the California Desert that are recommended suitable offer a much more extensive and diverse representation of desert wilderness values. There are approximately 14 miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.

While the Avawatz Mountains do offer an impressive mountainous backdrop to travelers on State Route 127, the South Avawatz Mountains WSA offers no single unique feature or attractions of special significance. The scenic values in the WSA represent only the norm for many desert mountain ranges.

Areas of prior mineral productivity surround the WSA. Also, two patented mining claims are located in the central portion of the WSA and one patented claim is near the northern border. Portions of the WSA itself contain high potentials for iron, silver, gold, and clay. These high potential areas are encumbered by 24 mining claims that include 480 acres of the WSA. Development of any valid claims would seriously degrade the natural character of the area. Given the history of the area and the recognized mineral potentials, the likelihood for valid, existing mineral rights and/or a major discovery is considered high.

Wilderness designation would prohibit full development of the energy and transmission corridor identified in the 1980 CDCA Plan and EIS. The two-mile wide corridor overlaps the entire southeastern boundary of the WSA for approximately one mile. This corridor, along with others in the CDCA, were designated to accommodate the long-term energy and communication needs of the southwestern United States. Other portions of the WSA are within a future utility corridor (1990-2020) identified for the State of California in the Western Regional Corridor Study (1980). Depending upon the juxtaposition of the WSAs ultimately designated wilderness within the CDCA, there may or may not be constraints to present and future development of such corridors.



The wildlife and vegetative resources within the area are typical of the surrounding desert. The area contains no unusual plants or State or Federally listed threatened or endangered plant or animal species. The mountainous area is transient range for desert bighorn sheep habitat in the northern Avawatz Mountains and the Soda Mountains to the south.

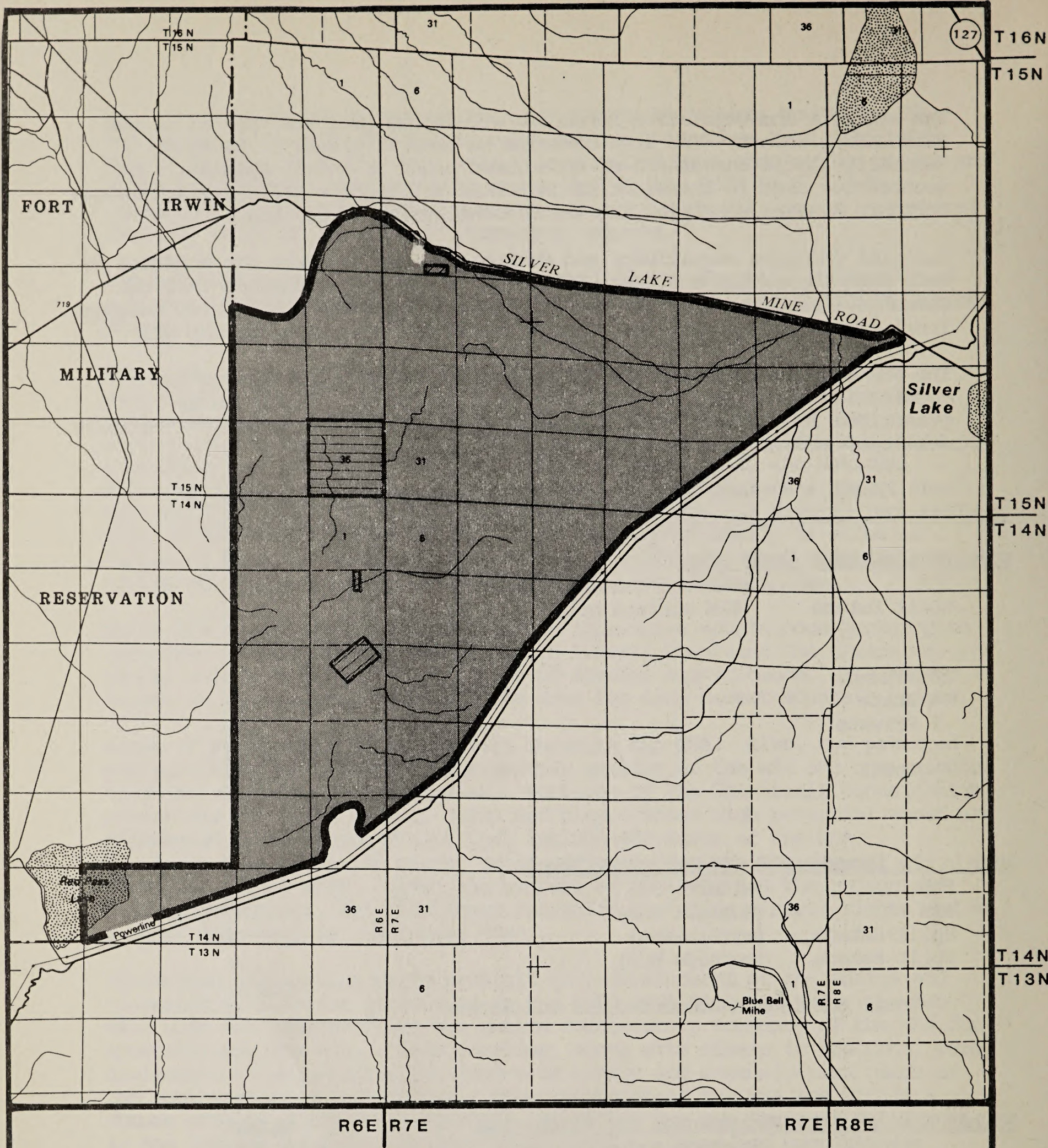
Cultural resource sensitivity and Native American concerns are moderate to very high throughout the WSA. Ethnographic research indicates that the Chemehuevi used the area for resource collection. The Old Spanish Emigrant Trail crosses in an east-west direction through the center of the WSA.

The WSA would be best managed and maintained under nonwilderness and a combination of low and moderate intensity management guidelines as prescribed in the CDCA Plan. The mineral wealth of the area could be fully developed without the sacrifice of desert resources.

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	26,621
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		750
Private		209
Total		<u>27,580</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	26,621
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>26,621</u>

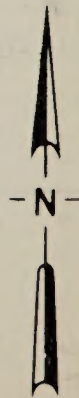




**South Avawatz Mountains  
Proposal  
MAP-1**

0 1 2 3  
MILES

CDCA-221A  
JUNE, 1988





### 3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

#### A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The area is largely untrammelled by man throughout. The imprint of man is substantially unnoticeable. With the exception of several areas impacted by previous mining activity and 14 miles of existing routes of travel, the remaining area retains its primeval character and influence.
2. Solitude: Outstanding opportunities for solitude are available. The canyons and washes provide topographic screening and separation into enclosed spaces. The Soda and Avawatz Mountains are visible from the bajada. The unbroken view of these large features provides a psychological feeling of vastness. However, on the bajadas, the lack of topographic diversity and vegetative screening can also have a limiting affect on opportunities.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The area provides for unconfined movement and primitive types of recreation. The existing routes of travel do not substantially limit opportunities. However, lack of available water is aggravated by extreme summer heat and low humidity.
4. Special Features: The mountainous portion of the WSA contains transient desert bighorn sheep habitat, a BLM sensitive species. Sheep occasionally travel between the Soda Mountains to the south and the northern Avawatz Mountains. The Old Spanish Emigrant Trail crosses the WSA in an east-west direction. Otherwise, the landforms, ecological diversity, and geological features are not unique, they are typical of features common throughout the surrounding deserts and mountains.

#### B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: The South Avawatz Mountains WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The WSA contains 26,621 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush ecosystem, which is well represented in other WSAs in the CDCA that are recommended suitable for wilderness designation.



Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,241,288
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,627,484

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of eight major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

Population Centers <u>California</u>	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
San Diego	15	1,043,680	100	3,378,814
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of 13 BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The closest designated wilderness area is Joshua Tree Wilderness, administered by Joshua Tree National Monument, 100 miles south of the WSA.



### C. Manageability

The South Avawatz Mountains WSA is manageable as wilderness. However, there are significant issues which would complicate the ability to maintain the existing wilderness values into the future.

The WSA contains 750 acres of State land and two patented mining claims. Any development and access requirements would likely be incompatible with wilderness values.

The likelihood for valid mineral rights and/or a major discovery is considered high. Twenty-four mining claims encumber 480 acres of the high potential mineral areas in the WSA.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

### D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The South Avawatz Mountains WSA is in the BLM Avawatz Mountain Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M data in the Wilderness section of the Desert Plan EIS (Volume B, Appendix III) in 1980 indicated that resource data for this WSA had not been fully analyzed, integrated, and interpreted at the time the wilderness recommendation was made. However, it did state that this WSA had possible potential for iron and other metals. The Iron Mountain mine, adjacent to the northwestern part of the WSA was in production in 1980. No unpatented mining claims had been recorded with BLM in the WSA as of December 12, 1979.

The GRA report supported the EIS and indicated resources of iron, silver, gold and clay within the WSA. Slightly more than one square mile in the northwestern part of the WSA was classified as having high potential for the occurrence of iron resources, based on indicated reserves and resources of 375,000 tons of hematite and magnetite at the patented Iron King Mine, and favorable geology consisting of Tertiary-age fan-lacustrine sequence containing limestone breccia. The Iron Mountain Mine, in the same geologic environment three-fourths of a mile northwest of the WSA, produced 700,000 tons of iron ore prior to 1980. About two square miles in the south-central part of the WSA were assessed as having high potential for the occurrence of silver, gold and bentonite clay resources based on past production.

The area surrounding the Iron King Mine in the northwestern part of the WSA was rated as having moderate potential for the occurrence of uranium based on a geochemical sample anomalous in uranium. The potential for occurrence should be considered low, since a single geochemical sample is insufficient evidence to base evidence for occurrence of a resource.



The southwestern part of the WSA, near Red Pass Lake was classified by the Geological Survey (USGS) in 1978 as prospectively for sodium. Since there are no known occurrences of sodium compounds in this area, the potential for occurrence is low.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the preliminary suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final recommendation: No USGS or U.S. Bureau of Mines mineral survey was completed for this WSA because it is recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

In 1985, a plan of operation was filed for precious metals exploration drilling about one mile north of the Goodwater Mine, just south of the center of the WSA. Also in 1985, U.S. Borax and Chemical Company filed a plan of operation which included an exploration drill hole in the northern part of this WSA. The plan also included several drill holes in adjacent WSA 221.

The WSA contains three patented mining claims, and unpatented lode mining claims in the central and northeastern portion of the WSA. Unpatented mining claims in the WSA are summarized in the following table taken from BLM records dated December, 1987.

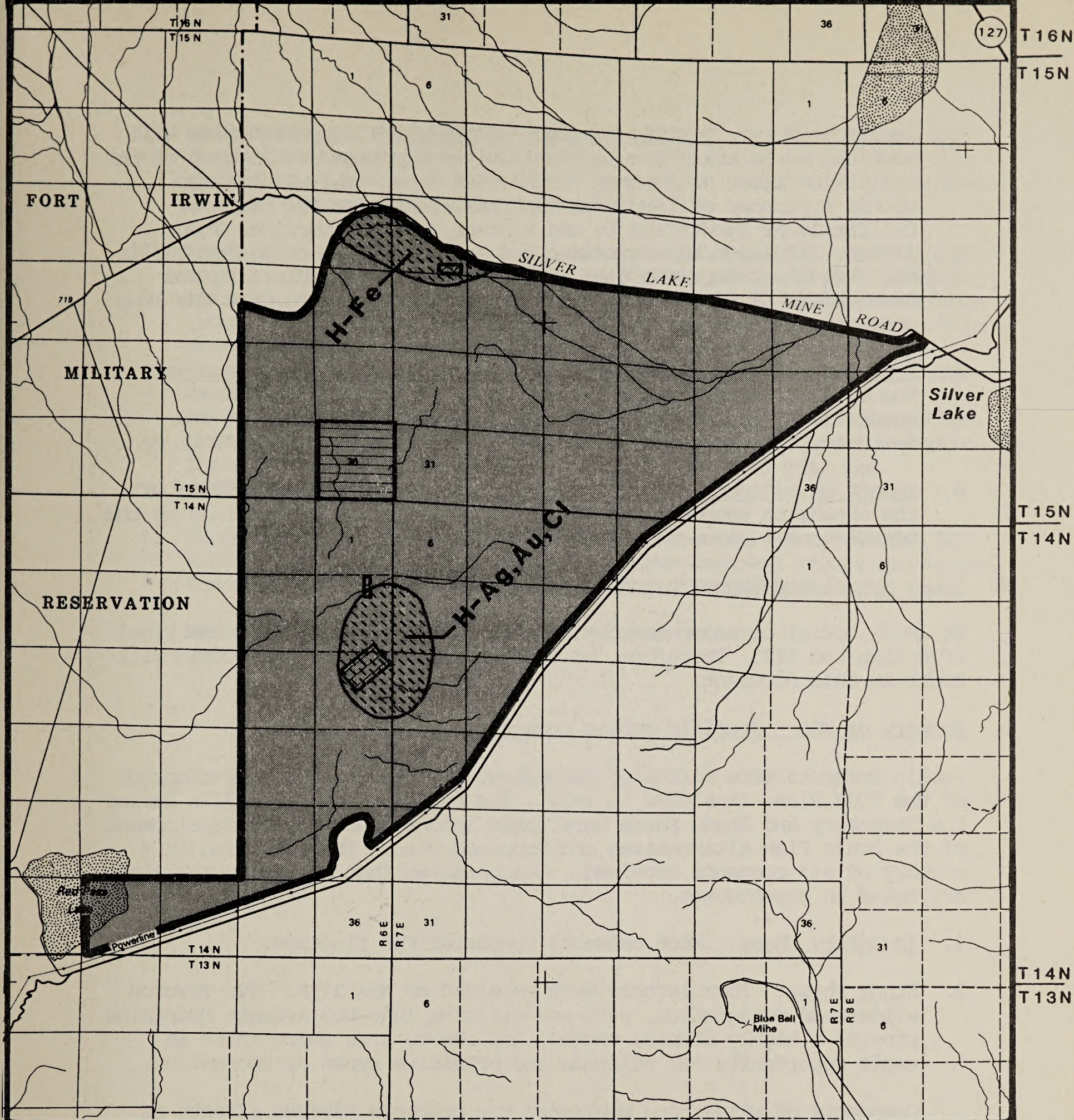
Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
MINING CLAIM						
Lode	N/A	24	24	N/A	480	480
Placer	N/A	0	0	N/A	0	0
Mill Site	N/A	0	0	N/A	0	0
Total	N/A	24	24	N/A	480	480

#### E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Noise, surface disturbance and access requirements for mineral exploration and development will negatively impact naturalness, solitude, and primitive and unconfined types of recreation.
2. Impact on Minerals and Energy: Opportunities for exploration and development of minerals and energy will continue to be available subject to applicable laws, regulations and the low and moderate intensity, multiple use management guidelines established in the CDCA Plan.
3. Impact on Desert Bighorn Sheep Habitat: The transient bighorn sheep habitat within the WSA will continue to receive priority consideration over conflicting land uses according to the low intensity, multiple use management prescriptions contained in the CDCA Plan.



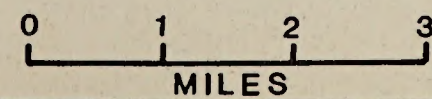
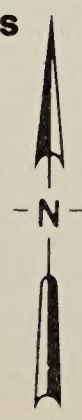


- NONE Recommended for Wilderness
- Recommended for Non Wilderness
- Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness
- Split Estate
- State
- Private

**South Avawatz Mountains  
Mineral Resource Potential**

- Explanation**
- High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
  - Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
  - M** Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area
  - H** High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area

- Commodity Symbols**
- Ag** Silver
  - Au** Gold
  - Cl** Clay
  - Fe** Iron



**MAP-2  
CDCA-221A**



4. Impact on Future Utility Corridor Development: Opportunities will continue to be available for full utilization and development of the utility corridor designated in the CDCA Plan. The WSA is also within a planned utility corridor (1990-2020) for the State of California as identified in the Western Regional Corridor Study (1980). Although this corridor was not identified or designated in the CDCA Plan, opportunities will be available for planning and development of future corridors that are necessary to meet the long-term growth needs of Southwestern United States.
5. Impact on Cultural Resource Values and Native American Concerns: The areas of sensitivity, in addition to applicable laws and regulations, are afforded the additional protection of the low intensity, multiple use guidelines in the CDCA Plan.
6. Impact on Adjacent Military Reservation: Scoping and analysis of the expansion proposal for Fort Irwin will not be constrained by the nonwilderness recommendation for the WSA.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Inaccuracies that are known to exist are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: Most comments supported the findings.
2. Study Phase: Four letters were received on WSA 221A. Two favored wilderness designation, with one claiming that the Avawatz Mountains provide a highly scenic, rugged, and remote area where there is ample opportunity for solitude and primitive types of recreation.

Opponents of wilderness mentioned the probable adverse effects of activities at Fort Irwin Military Reservation, the impacts of off-highway vehicle use on existing vehicle routes, and effects of mining activities at the Silver Lake Mine. The owner of the mine feared that wilderness designation would limit further development of mining activities.

Three comments were received in response to the Public Input Workbook (3/15/79). One letter was from the owner of the Silver Lake mine, requesting a one-half mile wide buffer along the road



between WSA 221 and WSA 221A because of heavy use for hauling ore. Another letter supported wilderness, noting the superior primitive qualities of the area. The third respondent wanted to limit the use of off-highway vehicles in the vicinity.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: Few public comments specific to WSA 221A were received in response to the Draft Plan Alternatives. However, this WSA was one of those opposed by the National Outdoor Coalition (NOC), a coalition of mining, rockhounding, and off-highway vehicle groups. A large number of club members sent in printed forms supporting the position of the NOC which was to classify this area as "moderate use;" this was the recommendation of the Use Alternative which recommended wilderness for WSA 221A. One letter preferred the No Action Alternative which would continue to permit the exploration and development of minerals, oil, gas, and geothermal resources.
4. Proposed Plan: Few specific comments were received concerning WSA 221A. Conservation and motorized vehicle-oriented groups maintained the same positions as for the Draft Plan Alternatives.

No comments were received from local governments.







# **Kingston Range**

*CDCA 222*







## KINGSTON RANGE WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CDCA-222)

### 1. THE STUDY AREA ---

300,549 acres

The majority of the Kingston Range WSA is located in northeastern San Bernardino County, although the study area's northwest corner extends into Inyo County. The WSA is located near the eastern edge of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The nearest communities are Baker, California, 50 miles southwest; Barstow, California, 110 miles southwest; and Las Vegas, Nevada, 50 miles northeast. The study area contains 282,931 acres of public land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), 16,205 acres of State land, and private ownerships totalling 1,413 acres (see Map 1 and Table 1).

Beginning at the northeast corner, the eastern WSA boundary follows the paved Excelsior Mine Road to a utility transmission line right-of-way road, which forms the first three and one-half miles of the southern boundary. The boundary leaves this road to skirt private property and public lands heavily impacted by mining activity in the Shadow Mountain area, then returns to the road for another four miles. Once again skirting a section of private property and public lands containing mining activity, the final six miles of the southern WSA boundary returns to follow the transmission line road. The transmission line, maintenance road, and portions of the WSA are within an energy and utility transmission corridor identified by the BLM in the CDCA Plan, and by the 1980 Western Regional Corridor Study. From the southwest corner, the western WSA boundary winds around the Silurian Hills, primarily following dry washes and roads, but sometimes running cross-country to exclude areas of mining activity. At the north end of the Silurian Hills, the boundary follows a road around the east side of Silurian Dry Lake, emerging on State Highway 127 at the site of Renoville. At this point, the boundary cherrystems an improved road that reaches for 15 and one-half miles deep into the heart of the WSA. This road forks, with one branch going to the Eastern Star Mine and the other to Kingston Spring. Returning again to State Highway 127, the western boundary follows the highway north for five and one-half miles, then swings sharply east to exclude the Dumont Dunes Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Area. The west WSA boundary then once again follows the highway for just over seven miles, finally swinging northeast to meet the Excelsior Mine Road at the WSA's northwest corner. The northern boundary follows this road for less than one and one-half miles. The remainder of the irregular northern boundary runs south of and roughly parallel to the Tecopa Road, excluding private property, mine access roads, and areas of heavy mining activity, finally emerging again on the Excelsior Mine Road at the WSA's northeast corner.

The WSA is easily accessible by two-wheel drive vehicle along State Highway 127, the Excelsior Mine Road, and via the cherrystemmed roads to the Eastern Star Mine and Kingston Spring. Off-highway vehicle trails provide additional access into the interior of the study area.



The diverse terrain of the Kingston Range WSA includes several valleys, bajadas, major washes, hills, and mountains of varying form. Within the northeast portion of the study area is the Kingston Range proper--the highest and most colorful of the WSA's mountains. Some 17 miles of continuous ridgeline is above 6,000 feet, capped by 7,323-foot Kingston Peak. The range can be envisioned as an island of montane environments in a sea of desert lowlands. A bajada slopes south from the Kingston Range and leads to the very broad, often steep-walled Kingston Wash. South of the wash lie the Shadow Mountains, a large series of low-lying rounded peaks with gently meandering interior canyons and numerous erosion channels. The Dumont Hills to the west of the Kingston Range are a series of hills standing out from a highly eroded bajada separating the range from Silurian Valley.

The vegetation is creosote bush scrub at lower elevations and juniper-pinyon woodland at higher elevations. A small stand of white fir occurs at upper elevations north of Kingston Peak. Several unusual plant assemblages are formed within the WSA. (See the discussion under Wilderness Characteristics.)

Portions of two Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) are within the WSA. The northwestern portion of the WSA includes about 70% of the Amargosa Canyon ACEC, established to protect permanent flowing water and associated wetland habitats, and cultural resources reflecting 8,000 years of human occupation. Approximately 50% of the Salt Creek Hills ACEC is included in the west side of the WSA, just south of the Dumont Dunes. This ACEC contains resources similar to that of Amargosa Canyon.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Four alternatives were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the CDCA Plan, protection, use, balanced and no action, and a summary of the area's wilderness values was included in Appendix III of the Final EIS.

2.	<u>RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE</u>	35,463	acres recommended for wilderness
		248,562	BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

Partial wilderness is the recommendation for the Kingston Range WSA. The 248,562 acres in this WSA recommended nonsuitable are released for uses other than wilderness. The majority of the WSA will be managed for low-intensity, carefully controlled use. In addition to the Federal acreage recommended for wilderness, BLM recommends that 1,094 acres of State land be acquired through exchange or purchase and designated as wilderness. With acquisition of these inholdings, a total of 35,463 acres are recommended for wilderness. Appendix 1 lists all inholdings and provides additional information on their acquisition. This recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.



The Balanced Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative as outlined in the CDCA Plan and further explained in the California Wilderness Study Overview.

The partial wilderness recommendation is based on the following rationale: (1) the lands recommended for wilderness contain the WSA's most outstanding wilderness values, as well as some noteworthy special features; (2) the recommended nonsuitable portion of the study area has potential for other resource uses, namely mining, livestock grazing, energy transmission, and motorized recreation; and (3) the 86% of the WSA recommended nonsuitable is largely void of special features. Those special features that do exist are concentrated in the existing ACECs, and can be protected, and in some cases better managed, through that designation.

The lands recommended for wilderness designation possess an outstanding primitive character exemplifying the qualities described in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act. The diverse topography and relatively dense vegetation offer a degree of visual screening which enhances primitive recreation activities and offers numerous opportunities for solitude. Opportunities for hiking, backpacking, nature study, photography, and desert peak climbing are outstanding and limited only by the interests of the desert recreationist. With over 500 plant species present, the WSA is one of the most botanically diverse areas within the CDCA. All or portions of five unusual plant assemblages are within the recommended wilderness area. A designation of wilderness for the recommended suitable portion of the Kingston Range WSA will also protect 16 square miles containing an immense concentration of significant cultural resources. At the time of wilderness inventory, the majority of these resources were unknown. Surveys completed by the University of California, Santa Cruz, in 1983, resulted in 42 new sites being recorded. The suitability recommendation will preclude any further vehicular use of approximately eight miles of primitive access routes of travel.

The majority of areas with moderate to high mineral potential have been excluded from the recommended wilderness area. Manageability is further enhanced because the recommended wilderness area contains only 14 unpatented lode mining claims. In contrast, the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA contains considerable acreage with moderate to high potential for a variety of locatable minerals: talc, gypsum, lead, silver, zinc, copper, zeolites, molybdenum, and iron. The area also has vast acreage with moderate potential for sodium or geothermal energy, which are leasable mineral resources. The recommended nonsuitable area contains 603 mining claims. Considering the area's mineral potential, it is probable that a sizable portion of these claims would prove to have a valid discovery. There are approximately 60 miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.

The WSA contains portions of the Horsethief Springs and Valley Wells Grazing Allotments, both of which are grandfathered uses, and the proposed Tecopa Grazing Allotment, which is within the recommended nonsuitable area of the WSA. Wilderness designation of the entire WSA would constrain additional



development of the grandfathered allotments to accommodate increased numbers of livestock, and would eliminate the possibility of establishing the proposed new allotment.

The southern boundary of the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA is within an energy and utility transmission corridor designated by both the CDCA Plan and the 1980 Western Regional Corridor Study. Wilderness designation of this area could constrain the placement of future facilities within the corridor.

The portion of the WSA recommended nonsuitable receives almost no hiking or backpacking use. Recreation use levels in general are low, but what does take place is almost exclusively vehicle dependent. Predominant activities include OHV touring and sightseeing, rockhounding, camping, nature study, and research. Kingston Wash, which bisects the area from west to east, is a favored OHV tour route. A segment of the proposed statewide Draft OHV trail system identified in the California Statewide Motorized Trails Plan passes through the recommended nonsuitable portion of this WSA. Sperry Wash Canyon is known among rockhounds as yielding some of the finest petrified wood in the desert. On the 248,563 acres recommended nonsuitable, vehicle use is currently allowed on all designated open routes, including washes, unless a route is specifically designated closed. Because of its large size, wilderness designation of the entire area would mean a significant curtailment of motorized recreation opportunities in this region of the desert.

Again within the nonsuitable area, the special biological and cultural resources contained in the two ACECs can be adequately protected by the corresponding special management prescriptions established for these areas. Legitimate scientific research, which would be constrained by wilderness designation, would be allowed to continue unhampered by additional regulation, thereby potentially increasing the contribution these areas could make to the body of scientific knowledge in both biological and anthropological disciplines.



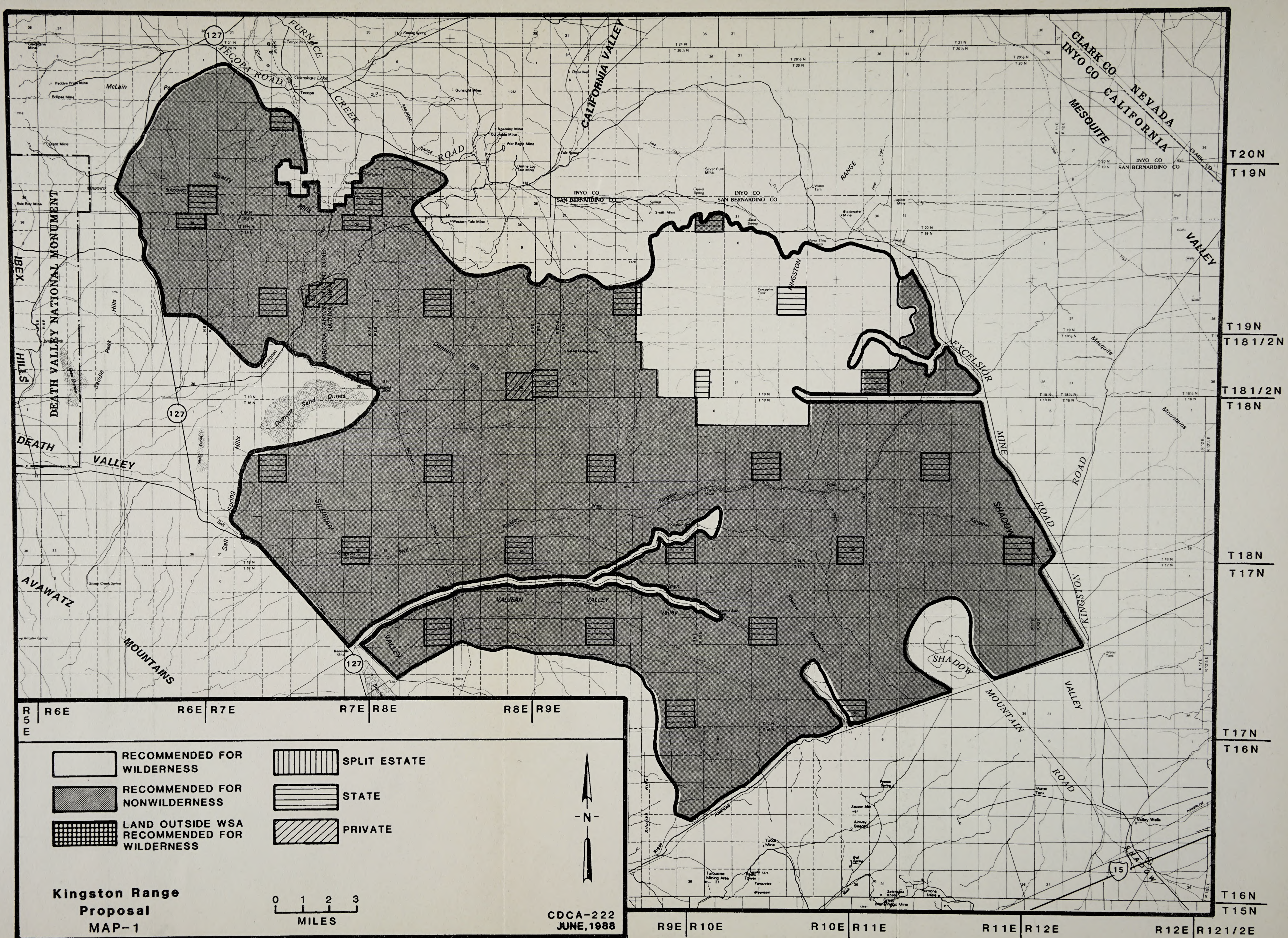








TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	282,931
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		16,205
Private		1,413
Total		<u>300,549</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	34,369
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>34,369</u>
Inholdings <sup>1</sup>		
State		1,094
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	248,562
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>248,562</u>

---

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1 is a detailed description of inholdings and split estate tracts included within the study. For purposes of this report, split estate lands are defined only as those lands with Federal surface and non Federal subsurface (minerals). Lands that have Federal minerals but non Federal surface should be classified in this report by the owner of the surface estate.



### 3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

#### A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The recommended wilderness portion of the Kingston Range WSA contains a few springs that have been developed, but are still natural in appearance. Some mineral exploration activities including adits, posts and monuments associated with mining claim location, and occasional traces of vehicle use on ways or in washes, are all substantially unnoticeable within the WSA.

Impacts to naturalness in the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA includes examples of all the manmade features mentioned above, plus some additional ones. Over 15 miles of the old Tonapah-Tidewater Railroad line runs from north to south through the western portion of the area recommended nonsuitable. Although the tracks and many of the ties have been removed, the railroad bed is still evident. In addition, a primitive OHV trail has developed alongside the old railroad bed, and has become a popular OHV tour route. Silurian Valley is located between the railroad grade and State Highway 127 on the WSA boundary and is laced with a network of OHV trails, many of them originating at the Dumont Dunes OHV Area immediately to the north.

The extreme northeastern portion of the area recommended nonsuitable includes an approximate two and one-half mile stretch of the paved Excelsior Mine Road.

Around the cherrystemmed portion of the improved route leading to Kingston Spring, intensive mineral exploration and development has substantially altered natural conditions. The State of California is actively leasing its section of land south of the spring for the extraction of pharmaceutical grade clay.

A mill site with associated dwellings and outbuildings exists in the northwestern portion of the WSA, in T.20N., R.8E., Section 29. Approximately one mile of a powerline passes through this area, with a service drop for the mill site. Both the powerline and the service drop are authorized by rights-of-way.

Abandoned homesites are scattered throughout the recommended nonsuitable area, at the old townsites of Sperry, Valjean, and Dumont, and isolated outlying areas. These sites typically consist of piles of debris and the collapsed, rotting remains of old structures.

2. Solitude: Aided by topography and low visitation, opportunities for solitude are present throughout the area. At present, human use is limited to fall hunting, mineral exploration and development, and trips to maintain ranch improvements.



Although the WSA does not include the Dumont Dunes OHV area, its exclusion from the WSA resulted in a large, seven-mile long by two-to seven-mile wide indentation in the western WSA boundary. Because of its intrusive shape, the sights and sounds of OHV play activity within the OHV area affect a large zone within the WSA.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The recommended suitable area presents opportunities for hiking, hunting, nature study, and photography. One of the most interesting features of this area is the superb long distance views framed by the granite boulders and wooded slopes of the Kingston Mountains. Kingston Peak is recognized as a challenge for climbers and is included on the Sierra Club's list of "California Desert Peaks."

Within the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA, quality primitive recreational opportunities are available at the Amargosa Canyon and Salt Creek Hills ACECs. The rest of the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA contains vast expanses of featureless landscape that, while it presents no barriers to constrain primitive recreation, also provides nothing to attract such use.

4. Special Features: There are several geologic formations within the WSA important for the fossils they contain. The oldest are the Pahrump Group at an age of 1,200 million years. The Pahrump Group is highly important to the study of evolutionary development because the oldest evidence of eukaryotic or mitotic cells have been found here. Another major milestone in the evolution of life on earth is recorded in the local strata, one of the few places where rocks spanning the transition between the Pre-Cambrian and Cambrian Ages are displayed. This period, some 570 million years ago, marked the origin of animals with shell-like outer coverings, and the subsequent widespread occurrence of macrofossils such as trilobites.

Five unusual plant assemblages (UPAs) occur either totally or partially within the recommended wilderness area. The first are riparian areas within the Amargosa Gorge and near Horsethief Springs. The second is a stand of enormous Nolina wolfii, some of them as much as 15 feet high and over ten feet in girth. They are found only here and in Joshua Tree National Monument. This extensive stand of giant Nolina occurs on the slopes and ridges of Tecopa Pass and along steep, rocky exposed slopes from 3,200 to 7,300 feet in elevation. The giant Nolina, with its tree-like stature and yucca-like form has a discontinuous distribution across the Mojave Desert and its occurrence in the eastern Mojave Desert is



limited to the Kingston Range. The third unusual plant assemblage is a calciphyte assemblage of rare limestone endemics and the fourth, a small enclave of white fir (Abies concolor), consisting of some 150 trees scattered between 6,900 and 7,200 feet along two steep canyons north of Kingston Peak. This is one of three relic stands of white fir in the California Desert. The fifth unusual plant assemblage is a portion of the huge Shadow Valley-Cima Dome Joshua tree forest, one of the densest concentrations of Joshua trees in the world.

Of the 505 species of native plants found in the Kingston Range, 32 species are considered endangered, rare, or of limited distribution by the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). Six species on the CNPS lists are currently under review for Federal listing as endangered or threatened species: pygmy agave, willow brickelbrush, Kingston bedstraw, Death Valley beard-tongue and Kingston rock cinquefoil.

The high elevations wooded with pinyon, juniper and white fir attract a number of species of birds that do not normally occur in the desert. The avifauna includes birds restricted to the relic white fir groves and many species which are at least partially dependent on it. Among these are the Virginia's warbler and the hepatic tanager which in the last decade in California, have only been recorded in this habitat. The presence of these and other species of birds has been noted in only two other eastern Mojave mountain ranges.

The Kingston Mountains are one of four localities in California in which confirmed sightings of the banded gila monster (Heloderma suspectum) have been made. The remaining three localities all have had one gila monster sighting whereas the Kingston Mountains have had three separate confirmed sightings of this lizard. The gila monster is fully protected under California law and is a BLM sensitive species in California. Although it is not under status review by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (US F&WS) for Federal listing as threatened or endangered, it is being considered for the State list of rare species.

The rugged mountains of the WSA provide ideal habitat for an estimated 50 desert bighorn sheep, a BLM sensitive species. Bighorn are present in many of the Mojave Desert mountain ranges, but water availability is the main factor limiting their populations. In some canyons in the southern Kingston Range, tinajas (natural water tanks) hold water for considerable periods after a rain. The tinajas in Sheep Tank Canyon are particularly well developed, occurring for several kilometers in the canyon bottom and reaching depths of more than ten feet. They are partially fed by small springs. Tinajas are also notable at Spotted Toad Spring, in a



tributary south of Kingston Peak, and in the canyon south of the Omega Mine. The four major springs in the central corridor of the Kingston Range all have dependable water supplies that have been used by bighorn sheep at one time or another.

Wild and free-roaming burros are found within the WSA, included in the Clark Mountain Herd Management Area.

The Kingston Range is highly concentrated with cultural resource sites dating back as early as A.D. 500. In addition to 42 new sites recorded by the University of California, Santa Cruz, in 1983, a wide variety of archaeological sites had been previously recorded including eight base camps, 19 temporary camps, two rock art sites, pottery scatters, lithic scatters and quarries, two agave roasting pits and numerous occurrences of isolated artifacts.

The preceding paragraphs describe the special features within the recommended suitable area. The recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA is largely lacking in special features, with the notable exceptions of the Amargosa Canyon ACEC and the Salt Creek Hills ACEC.

Permanent flowing water and associated wetland habitats in the Amargosa Canyon ACEC provide food, cover, and nesting space to a great variety of birds. Several fish, mammals, insects, and mollusks inhabiting the Amargosa River drainage are animals with very limited distribution or low populations. The Amargosa vole (Microtus californicus scirpensis) and the least Bell's vireo (Vireo bellii pusillus) are listed as endangered by the State of California and are currently under status review by the U.S. F&WS for possible Federal listing as threatened or endangered. The California Yellow-billed cuckoo (Coccyzus americanus occidentalis) has been listed as rare by the State of California.

The Amargosa Canyon ACEC's permanent flowing water has attracted humans for at least 8,000 years. Four distinct aboriginal cultural complexes are represented here: Paleo-Indian, Lake Mohave/Pinto, Amargosa, and Shoshonean. Identifiable remains include sleeping circles; gravel figures; chopper tools; worked flakes; a variety of diagnostic projectile points, including Pinto, Gypsum, Elko, and Rose Springs; metates; mortars; pottery; scrapers; and pendants. There is no doubt that additional cultural resources exist in the canyon, but little formal work has been done here to date.

Amargosa Canyon has also been the scene of important historical developments. The first was the establishment of the Old Spanish Trail about 1830. This trail became a major Spanish supply route and served as a primary means of entrance into California until well after the Spanish/Mexican period. The trail was used by large numbers of immigrants, traders, miners, and horse and mule pack trains. A portion of the Tonopah and Tidewater Railroad line, built to transport borax from the Death Valley region, was constructed



through the canyon around 1906. The line was used until approximately 1940. The rails were removed during World War II, and all bridges have vanished from the effects of weathering, erosion, and vandalism. However, the railroad grade remains very evident to this day. Both the railroad line and the Old Spanish Trail played important roles in the settlement and development of California.

Within the Salt Creek Hills ACEC, Salt Creek is one of a very few streams in the California desert situated on a valley floor rather than on a mountain or in a deep, rocky gorge. Subterranean water is forced to the surface at this point and runs intermittently for approximately one mile. The water and associated vegetation support a variety of wildlife species which do not occur in nearby drier habitats. Breeding bird surveys show that bird densities are many times higher and contain higher species diversity than other desert habitats. Nine species are on the Audubon Society's "Blue List" of declining species. A plant known in this general area, Centaurium namophilum, has been Federally listed as an endangered species.

Salt Creek also contains important historic and prehistoric cultural resources. The area was first occupied by Europeans around 1850, and was the site of the first hard rock gold mine in the Mojave Desert. A large number of historical structural remains, including mine shafts, cabins, roads, head frames, water tanks, and walls still exist, although many have been vandalized. The majority of prehistoric sites within the ACEC are small temporary camps. Based on projectile point typing, the main prehistoric occupation appears to have been during the Pinto (7,000 to 4,000 years ago) and Amargosa (4,000 to 1,000 years ago) Periods. Very little formal archeological work has been done at Salt Creek.

## B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 213,701 acres of the American Desert/Creosote Bush ecosystem and 69,230 acres of the American Desert/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland ecosystem. The WSA is an ecological transition zone. The Kingston Range is important for the study of the interaction of biotic influences of the Great Basin and Mojave Desert. The flora and fauna of both geographic regions meet in the Kingston Range with numerous species reaching their northern and southernmost distribution limits.



Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	117	4,054,497
American Desert/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	1	21,485	24	637,974
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
American Desert/Creosote Bush	1	343,753	88	3,440,693
American Desert/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	1	21,485	16	416,723

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of five major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of wilderness areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of these population centers.

Table 3  
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers

<u>Population Centers</u>	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,616
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The closest designated wilderness is Joshua Tree Wilderness in Joshua Tree National Monument, 120 road miles southwest. Nine BLM study areas recommended for wilderness designation are within 50 air miles of the Kingston Range WSA, six in the California Desert District and three in Nevada's Las Vegas District.



### C. Manageability

The Kingston Range WSA is manageable as wilderness. However, several factors complicate manageability throughout the WSA, but especially on the portion recommended nonsuitable.

The southern and western boundaries of the recommended suitable area follow unsurveyed section lines; the northern and eastern boundaries follow arbitrary contour lines. Exact on-the-ground boundary location is difficult due to the fact that no natural terrain features are followed. However, within a mile inside the recommended wilderness boundary, the terrain is such that inadvertent use by vehicles would be almost impossible.

A total of 617 mining claims indicate substantial industry interest in the mineral resources within the Kingston Range WSA. Of these, 603 are within the recommended nonsuitable area, while only 14 have been located in the portion of the WSA recommended for wilderness. The area's mineral potential makes it probable that some of these claims would withstand a validity examination, allowing development to occur even with wilderness designation. Unless the valid rights could be acquired, maintenance of wilderness values could not be assured.

Designating the recommended nonsuitable portion of the study area as wilderness has potential to conflict with development of future communication and energy transmission facilities. The south boundary is within an energy transmission corridor designated by the CDCA Plan, which is also delineated as a four- to six-mile wide utility corridor identified by the 1980 Western Regional Corridor Study. Wilderness designation of this portion of the Kingston Range WSA could prohibit full development of the corridor, forcing installation of new energy transmission lines in other corridors or in areas not previously disturbed. Depending upon which WSAs are ultimately designated wilderness within the CDCA, there may be constraints placed upon the long-term energy and communication transmission capabilities in the southwestern United States.

Portions of two grazing leases exist within the Kingston Range WSA. The WSA provides an estimated 4,700 animal unit months (AUMs) of forage, of which 600 AUMs are within the recommended suitable area. If the recommendations of this report are adopted, future grazing management conflicts will be minor. However, if a larger area were to be designated wilderness, it could preclude some future improvements as well as a proposed new grazing allotment.

A portion of the Clark Mountain Burro Herd Management Area is within the WSA. Plans for burro removal from this area could be affected by wilderness designation, as some of the techniques employed are not compatible with wilderness management.



Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The Kingston Range WSA is located in parts of three different BLM Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Areas (GRAs), the Kingston Range, Halloran and Dumont Dunes GRAs. At the time of the recommendation process the WSA was classified as having specific occurrence potential for silver, lead, copper, and gold, industrial minerals including talc, gypsum, zeolites, and bentonite, and common mineral materials (e.g., sand and gravel). The area was also considered as having potential for leasable mineral resources such as oil, gas, sodium, and geothermal energy.

A high potential for the occurrence of zeolites and bentonite was recognized in the northwest corner of the WSA. In 1979, a major company was drilling on part of a zeolite deposit which was known to extend into the WSA. Bentonite was being mined in McClain Park outside the northwest boundary of the WSA. This deposit is thought to extend into the WSA. A large area with a high occurrence potential for talc occurs along the northern boundary of the WSA in the area recommended for nonwilderness. The high occurrence potential for gypsum is also found along the northern border, adjacent to a former gypsum producer near China Ranch.

A small area along the northern border of the WSA was classified as having a moderate occurrence potential for lead, zinc, and silver. This area is adjacent to the Alexander Mine just north of the WSA. The Alexander Mine is comprised of north-trending quartz veins in Precambrian Noonday dolomite containing lead-zinc-silver mineralization. The Precambrian metasedimentary sequence here is of a similar age and lithology to those rocks north of Tecopa Pass (Tecopa mining district about five miles north of WSA), where large quantities of silver-lead and zinc ore were mined. Total production is not known.

The central and eastern parts of the WSA including Valjean Hills-Rabbit Hole Spring Area and the Kingston Range has not had a detailed analysis of the mineral occurrence potential. Nevertheless, the north and northeast parts of the WSA have high occurrence potential for talc, iron, silver-lead, and copper. The main block of the Kingston Range in the northeastern corner of the WSA is a granitic batholith with moderate potential for copper, iron, silver, gold, and molybdenum. An area indicated in the northeast part of the WSA with a high potential for copper, iron, and silver is mainly in the dolomitic rocks adjacent to the Kingston pluton. Other high and moderate potential occurrence zones for gypsum, copper, lead, molybdenum, and silver in the southeast part



of the WSA are based on small mines located within the area (See Map 2). Production and reserves are not known. As of December, 1979, there were over 25 claims within this WSA.

An area in the northwestern portion of the WSA was identified as having a high potential for sand and gravel due to known deposits and proximity to the county maintained road. Also, an area in the northwest segment of the recommended nonwilderness portion of the WSA was classified as having a moderate potential for metasomatic type tungsten deposits (skarn).

The northwestern and western portions of the area recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation were classified by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) in 1979 as prospectively valuable for sodium and geothermal energy. Both the sodium and geothermal areas were classified by BLM in 1980 as having a moderate potential for occurrence.

Classification of mineral resource potentials shown on Map 2 for the recommended nonwilderness portion of the WSA are based on data available in 1980 during the preliminary recommendation process.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the preliminary suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final recommendation: The USGS and U.S. Bureau of Mines BOM conducted mineral surveys of the portion of the WSA recommended suitable for wilderness designation. USGS Bulletin 1709, released in 1987, assessed the results of these surveys. The mineral potentials delineated in the USGS bulletin correspond closely with BLM's 1980 mineral potential classifications for the portion of the WSA recommended suitable for wilderness designation. However, the USGS/BOM data are more defined and therefore are used on Map 2.

Bulletin 1709 indicates that there are at least six talc deposits either within or immediately outside the northeast portion of the WSA in the Kingston Range. Their combined resource totals approximately 1.7 million tons of talc, of which 430,000 tons are within the study area. Talc occurs in lenses 20 feet to 150 feet thick and up to 1000 feet long, within alteration zones caused by contact metamorphism of dolomite by diabase intrusions. The Beck Mine, one-quarter mile north of the WSA is an excellent example of an iron-skarn deposit. The iron rich lenses at the Beck Mine are up to 150 feet wide, and up to 1500 feet long, with reserves identified as 7.2 million tons of iron ore averaging between 45 to 56% iron. Talc, iron-skarn, and bedded iron deposits occur in the upper Cambrian Kingston Peak Formation and are classified as having a high and moderate potential for occurrence along the eastern side of the portion of the WSA recommended suitable for wilderness designation and along the northern border of the WSA.



A high potential for the occurrence of copper-iron-silver deposits include the Momi Mine and extension, the U-Sun-Up prospect, and the Horse Thief prospect all within the recommended wilderness portion of the WSA. The Momi Mine contains 40,000 tons of identified resource averaging 24.6 percent iron and 5.6 percent copper, and from one grab sample 0.3 ounce per ton silver was reported. The other prospects listed above have similar metals, of lesser grade and no identified reserve.

There has been documented past production of talc and iron from within the WSA.

As of December 1987, there were a total of 617 unpatented mining claims within the WSA recorded with BLM, as summarized in the mining claims below. Unpatented lode mining claims are located in the north and south-central areas of the portion of the WSA recommended suitable for wilderness designation. Unpatented mining claims are located throughout the recommended nonwilderness portion of the WSA; however, heavy concentrations of placer claims are in the western and southeastern portions. Lode mining claims in the recommended nonwilderness portion of the WSA are concentrated in the west and southeast. As of December 1987, there is one current exploration plan of operations on file with the BLM within the WSA.

Unpatented mining claims are summarized in the following table taken from BLM records dated December, 1987.

Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
MINING CLAIM						
Lode	14	157	171	280	3,140	3,420
Placer	0	443	443	0	17,720	17,720
Mill Site	0	3	3	0	15	15
Total	14	603	617	280	20,875	21,155

#### E. Summary of Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action

1. Impact on Wilderness Values: Wilderness values will be maintained on the 14% of the WSA to be designated wilderness. On the remainder of the WSA, wilderness values will gradually decline in areas with moderate to high mineral potential as a result of exploration and development activities. Values will also gradually decline in areas exposed to continued OHV recreation. Large portions of the WSA will remain largely unvisited and undeveloped, and will retain most of their wilderness values.















2. Impact on Motorized Recreation: Vehicle use is currently allowed throughout the WSA on all designated open routes, including washes, unless a route is specifically designated closed. The proposed action will reduce the opportunities for certain activities that rely on vehicles, such as touring or rockhounding, within the part of the WSA to be designated wilderness. However, these activities are pursued only to a limited degree within the recommended wilderness portion of the WSA. Extensive opportunities for motorized recreation will remain available on the part of the WSA to remain nonwilderness, and in nearby areas.
3. Impact on Sensitive Plant and Animal Species: Within the recommended wilderness, most surface disturbing activities will be prohibited or greatly limited in scope, providing protection to wildlife habitat and populations. Sensitive plant species will benefit from the reduction in surface disturbance that wilderness management will provide. However, increased frequency of human use may have a negative impact on wildlife species or habitat in specific areas such as springs which are attractive to wilderness users. Within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA, sensitive species are concentrated in the ACECs, and are consequently protected by special actions outlined in the ACEC management plans.
4. Impact on Cultural Resources: Exploration, research, and excavation of the proposed wilderness area's cultural resources will be restricted somewhat by prohibition of vehicle use and constraints on site excavation. Cultural resource preservation will be enhanced by limitations on surface disturbance, but possible increased frequency of use by wilderness enthusiasts may lead to some disturbance of sites. The proposed action will have adverse effects on cultural resources of the nonsuitable part of the WSA if areas are developed for mineral resource values. These impacts will be site-specific and mitigated whenever possible.
5. Impact on Locatable Mineral Exploration and Development: Exploration and development would be unaffected on the nonsuitable part of the WSA, containing 603 mining claims. The recommended wilderness area will be withdrawn from mineral entry. Development of the 14 existing claims will be subject to proof of a valid discovery.
6. Impact on Leasable Mineral Exploration and Development: All of the areas identified as having a moderate to high potential for leaseables (sodium and geothermal energy) are situated in the recommended nonwilderness portion of the WSA, and will therefore be unaffected by the proposed action.
7. Impact on California Statewide OHV Trails Plan: Development of a portion of the statewide OHV trail system within the WSA will be possible, consistent with CDCA Plan guidelines.



8. Impact on Regional Energy Transmission: The proposed action will allow full development of the existing energy and communication transmission corridor, consistent with CDCA Plan guidelines.
9. Impact on Research and Study Activities: Activities will be reduced somewhat in the part of the WSA proposed for wilderness designation by restricting the use of mechanized equipment and vehicles. Within the 86% of the WSA recommended nonsuitable, activities can continue based on guidelines established in the CDCA Plan.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the CDCA Plan and EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Public comments were solicited throughout all phases in the development of the CDCA Plan, finalized in 1980. Issues raised by the public during the Inventory and Study Phase were taken into account during development of the Draft Plan Alternatives and Proposed Plan. The following is a summary of all comments received. Known inaccuracies are noted in parentheses.

1. Inventory Phase: Comments directed to the inventory included: (1) a map correction for the location of Baker; (2) statements on unnatural areas that have been excluded; (3) agreement on the naturalness of the area meeting wilderness criteria; and, (4) questions on the validity of deletions. The area has been extensively field-checked to verify public comments. A few minor boundary changes have been made.
2. Study Phase: Forty of the 74 letters received on this WSA opposed wilderness designation. A major concern of opponents was mineral development and potential. The area was said to be a potential source of oil, gas, geothermal energy, lead, zinc, silver, gold, copper, iron, and talc. The Silurian Hills were specifically mentioned as a mineralized zone. A second major concern was that the area remain accessible to rockhounds, since it contains several popular collecting sites. Other recreational activities occurring here which opponents wished to continue were motorized vehicle use and camping. The existence of several mines and their access roads was felt to detract from wilderness quality. Transmission lines, vehicle noise, ranch and mine activities, and highway traffic were sights and sounds believed to degrade wilderness values.

A corridor through the area was requested for a coal slurry transport system. A boundary change was requested to exclude a mining area.



Proponents of wilderness status for this WSA mentioned wildlife, vegetative, geologic, and scenic resources in need of protection. Amethyst and quartz outcrops were scenic elements specifically noted. Wildlife included the Utah black-headed snake and the western red-tailed skunk. Vegetation included saltbush and the white fir forest and unique "giant Nolinias" found on Kingston Peak. One correspondent spoke of the unusual opportunity to view the vast, flat, mountain-encircled Valjean Valley with no transmission lines marching across it to mar the scene. The value of a flat tract of land for wilderness, as opposed to the usually designated mountainous areas, was stressed, since some primitive recreationists are walkers, not climbers.

Many letters urged the addition of the Dumont Dunes to WSA 222, on the basis that the scars of OHV use would disappear rapidly with the cessation of vehicle use under wilderness management.

Many comments were received in response to the Public Input Workbook (3/25/79). Some wanted wilderness in order to protect wildlife and restrict vehicle use. Others wanted continued access for rockhounding, and one considered mineral development a more appropriate use for the area than wilderness. A few comments requested boundary adjustments to eliminate incompatible uses.

3. Draft Plan Alternatives: A variety of comments specific to this WSA was received in response to the Draft Desert Plan. Some were in complete agreement with the Protection Alternative, while others wanted to use ecological boundaries for wilderness instead of highways. Buffer zones around the wilderness area were suggested. Support was also expressed for the Balanced Alternative.

Continued access to collecting sites was requested by rockhounds, and many considered that mineral development was a better use for the area than wilderness. The National Outdoor Coalition (NOC), a coalition of mining, rockhounding, and OHV groups, supported the Use Alternative, which recommended a small portion of WSA 222, the Kingston Range, for wilderness status. The remainder of the WSA would be designated Class "M" (moderate use) or Class "I" (Intense Use). A large number of club members sent in coupons or letters supporting this position. Conservation oriented groups recommended designating the entire area as wilderness and extending it to include the Dumont Dunes and Amargosa Canyon.

4. Proposed Plan: Comments were similar to those for the Draft Plan Alternatives. A large number of respondents supported the idea of expanding the area recommended for wilderness status to include the Shadow Mountains, Kingston Wash, The Dumont Hills, upper Seyah Wash, and part of Valjean Valley. The Resources Agency of the State of California made a similar request.

No comments were received from local governments.



APPENDIX 1  
ESTIMATED COSTS OF ACQUISITION OF NON-FEDERAL HOLDINGS WITHIN  
AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR DESIGNATION  
KINGSTON RANGE WSA (CDCA-222)

PARCEL No.	LEGAL DESCRIPTION				TOTAL ACREAGE	NUMBER OF OWNERS	TYPE OF OWNERSHIP BY ESTATE		PRESENTLY PROPOSED FOR ACQUISITION	PREFERRED METHOD OF ACQUISITION	ESTIMATED COST OF ACQUISITION	
	TWNSHP	RNG	SEC	MERIDIAN			SURFACE ESTATE	SUBSURFACE ESTATE			LAND COSTS (\$1000)	PROCESSING COSTS (\$1000)
1	19N.	4E.	16	SBM	160	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
2	19N.	9E.	36	SBM	320	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
3	19N.	10E.	16	SBM	640	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0
4	20N.	9E.	36	SBM	360	1	STATE	STATE	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0

These figures were derived from Bureau Land Records and provide for more detail than GIS estimates and therefore may differ from acreage summaries in Table 1.



